THIRTY-TWO PAGES. ONE PENNY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 360. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 23RD, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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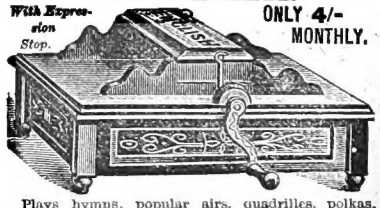

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GRAVE AND GAY

Short Stories

Edited by C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 360.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending November 23rd, 1895.

A SISTER'S DEVOTION.

THEY had never seen each other before they became fellow passengers on the big Indian liner that was conveying them to Bombay—he to rejoin his regiment, after a period of six months' leave, and she to return to her father and elder sister after an absence of nearly ten years.

To the young girl just fresh from school there had been a wondrous fascination about the handsome, good-looking officer, who knew all about the part of India she was going to, and could give her a very graphic insight to the pleasures and gaieties which, as the daughter of a man holding a high official position, as was the case with her father, Mr. Atherstone, she would find awaiting her.

Under these circumstances it was not to be wondered at that what had at the commencement been merely a pleasant friendship between Lieutenant Charles Tripney and Miss Gracie Atherstone rapidly developed into a mutual attachment, and before the voyage was half over they were engaged to each other.

At the time when this story commences they were strolling up and down the deck agreeably engaged in discussing their future plans.

"Do you know I can hardly believe it is real sometimes?" the girl said.

"Believe what, dearest?"

"That you and I are actually engaged, you know."

"Yes, and I hope shall be married some day, too."

"Oh, Charlie, suppose anything should happen to separate us."

"But it shan't, my darling. My uncle of whom I have told you, has always said that when I marry he will make me a handsome allowance, and he has often told me I am to be his heir. Of course, there is your father——"

"Oh, I don't think the dear old dad will object; but don't you think I ought to tell him as soon as I see him?"

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"I've been thinking about that, little woman, and I think it would be better if the news came from me; I dare say I can manage to get two or three days from my Colonel, on urgent and special business, and I could do the journey up and back in three days."

"Just as you think best, Charlie, but I may tell my sister Maisie, mayn't I?"

"By all means, my dear, and I hope she won't be disappointed at your marrying a lieutenant in a line regiment."

The important question having thus been settled, the conversation took a more amatory turn, to repeat which would not advance this story in any way; suffice it to say the voyage ended without any exciting incident.

On landing the lovers each went their separate way—he to the headquarters of his regiment, and she in charge of the lady who had acted as chaperon on the voyage out to her father's home in the Himalayas.

The meeting between father and daughter was somewhat constrained, ten years being a long period of separation; but if not demonstrative in his welcome, he was unmistakably glad to have her with him again, and she longed to tell him of her newly-found happiness. At any rate, she could make a confidante of her sister Maisie—a tall, handsome girl, who had been much sought after in marriage, but who still remained heart whole, as she said, although if the truth was told there had been an episode in her life when she had been as deeply in love as her younger sister, but a misunderstanding had taken place and the affair was broken off. The result was that her whole nature had so changed that for some time past she had enjoyed the reputation of being one of the most notorious flirts at the station; which was saying a good deal.

Such was the confidante to whom the younger girl was about to outpour the story of the happiness which had almost overwhelmed her.

The two girls were seated on the day of the younger's arrival in the deep verandah of their father's chalet, that being the only place where it was possible to feel the

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slightest relief from the excessive heat of the tropical sun.

It was easy to see at a glance that they were sisters, but the fresh, fair complexion of the younger girl, and the bright, happy expression on her face, was in marked contrast to the sallow and hard look on the face of her elder companion.

"I declare it's quite a comfort to have you out, child; I am getting sick and tired of India and everything belonging to it—I do wish papa would retire and go home."

"I always thought from your letters that you liked the life out here, but I shouldn't care to live here altogether, I think—no, I am sure I should not," she continued after a moment's pause.

The elder girl looked at her intently, and Gracie felt herself blushing violently.

"You had better tell me all about it, child."

"Tell you all about what, dear?"

"Oh, you little goose! your tell-tale face betrayed your secret at once. Is he very nice? and are you going to tell papa?"

"He is coming here himself to see papa."

"Goodness gracious, child, what do you mean? Why, you only landed a week ago!"

"Now, Maisie, I will tell you all about it; and then you can judge for yourself."

The elder sister listened to the recital with an air of interest, and then said abruptly: "And do you think he won't see somebody else before long?"

"Oh, you misjudge him, you do indeed. I am sure that he never would."

"There, don't be silly, child," the elder sister said in a kinder tone than she had before adopted; "I didn't mean anything. But things are different out here to what they are in England you will find."

"Tell me, Maisie, have you ever been *really* in love? I don't mean——"

"In love? Of course I have," said Maisie with a hard laugh. "We all do here in India; it is the only thing to live for; but it doesn't last long, that's one thing."

"Oh, Maisie, it is dreadful to hear you talk like that; you don't mean it, do you?"

"Oh, you musn't believe all I say, dear. It's a way I've got; and now tell me all about it again."

Nothing loath, the younger girl told the story over again, and was so interested in her subject that she did not notice her sister seemed more or less bored as she went on. Once only she evinced any real interest, and that was when the name of the uncle of her sister's lover was mentioned.

"Maurice Fitzgerald, did you say? Why that must be the commissioner who is going to inspect the station next month. I heard papa say so; I wonder," she went on with a sneer, "your devoted lover did not impart this information to you."

"I am sure he did not know, otherwise he would have told me."

"Well, I shouldn't worry about it, anyway, if I were you; and now let's talk about something else if you don't mind."

This was hardly the way in which poor Gracie had anticipated her secret would have been received, and she made up her mind not to revert to the subject again unless her sister did.

One great source of comfort to her was her lover's letters, for he managed to find time to write to her nearly every day, and in the very first, after he had seen his uncle, he told her with delight that he was going to visit the district in the course of a few weeks, when he had promised to get introduced to her so that he could form his own opinion.

"He is awfully pleased with your photograph," the letter continued, "and so I do not fear for the result; and do you know he has been good enough to say that, if I like, he will arrange for me to exchange into a regiment stationed at home, and so we can be married almost immediately. I am afraid India will not suit your health for long, and so I shall most certainly avail myself of his kindness, if your father raises no objection. I am sorry to say I shall not be able to get away until after next month to come and see your father, but perhaps it is just as well. You and my uncle will have met before then."

"I wonder what Maisie would say now if I told her. I knew Charlie would not keep anything from me," Gracie thought to herself.

The weeks went on, and Gracie was not only becoming used to her new surroundings, but was, as might have been expected, enjoying to the full the succession of balls and other gaieties to which she was being continually invited. One thing, however, made her very uneasy at times, and that was the intimate friendship which seemed to exist between her elder sister and a certain Captain Hylton, of the well-known regiment, the Blue Dragoons.

She herself had been introduced to him soon after her arrival from England, and attracted evidently by her fresh, youthful beauty, he had endeavoured to pay her attention; but from the very first she had taken a dislike to the man, and made no secret of her aversion towards him. Young as she was she was not without a certain amount of experience, and from what she heard it was quite plain that her antipathy towards the gallant captain was not without reasonable foundation.

He had already figured conspicuously in a certain notorious divorce case, and altogether enjoyed a none too desirable reputation.

More than once the younger sister felt impelled to say what she thought to the elder one, but after her first few days together, a certain amount of estrangement seemed to have sprung up between them, and there was an absence of that sisterly confidence and affection for which the younger had hoped before she arrived.

Each went their own way, in fact, and the less they were together the better they seemed to agree.

The day of the great social event of the season had at last arrived—the Governor's Ball—and for once the sisters had a subject in common on which to hold an animated discourse.

On arriving at the Governor's house they found Captain Hylton awaiting them, and the familiar air of proprietorship with which he approached the elder sister, and assisted her to remove her wraps, caused Gracie a pang of uneasiness. Once within the brilliant splendour of the ballroom she found herself a centre of admiration, and it was evident she would not have the mortification of having to look on whilst the others danced.

Throughout the greater part of the night she only caught sight of her sister once, and then she was waltzing with Captain Hylton.

A longer interval than usual between the dances gave an opportunity of sitting out in the verandah for a while, of which the majority present availed themselves, and Gracie's partner, having found her a snug corner, had left her to go and seek his partner for the next dance, the music for which had just commenced. She was wondering to herself how long her partner would be

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before he discovered her retreat, when she heard voices on the terrace outside; evidently the couple thought the verandah was deserted.

The listener could only make out scraps of the conversation in a man's voice—a voice she recognised as that of Captain Hylton, but he was evidently pressing his companion to elope with him. Who she might be she did not dare to think, when suddenly her worst fears were realised, as she heard her sister's voice in reply agreeing to the proposed arrangement, and then saying wearily: "And now take me inside, please."

The last strains of the waltz were dying away before Gracie seemed to recover her senses. She sat quite still, feeling that she was trembling violently all over, and yet utterly incapable of doing anything.

"Ah, here you are, Miss Atherstone, I have been looking for you everywhere." The words roused her to herself, as her intended partner for the dance which had just terminated made his appearance; at the same time a crowd of dancers filed into the verandah.

"I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me dancing any more to-night. It's very silly, of course, but a feeling of faintness came over me just now, and I shall go home. Would you very kindly take me to the door and tell my sister why I am leaving early?"

Having wrapped her cloak closely round her she stood in the shadow of the big portico awaiting her sister and their joint chaperon. Just then a man passed out and said hurriedly: "Four o'clock at the bottom of the road. I am just off to pack; I find the mail does stop this morning after all, and not to-morrow. Don't be late or we shall miss it," and without waiting for her to reply he was gone.

"Will Maisie never come," she said to herself, as the minutes went by. "Ah, here she is at last," and the two ladies appeared.

"What on earth is the matter, child? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"I feel a little faint, that's all. I shall be better when I get home."

The journey was accomplished in absolute silence, each being busy with her own thoughts; but with what a difference!

The big clock was chiming out the three-quarters, when a girl, wearing a long cloak with a hood which effectively obscured her features, stole noiselessly out of Mr. Atherstone's house, and without looking either to the right or left, walked hurriedly down the road.

In the dim morning light she could just see a jampan with extra bearers, and close by a man holding the reins of a smart-looking service pony.

"There is no time to waste," he said, as he hastily assisted her into into the conveyance, and the next moment had sprung upon his pony's back. The path was steep and narrow, but the bearers made good progress, and reached the station just as the mail was coming in.

"Another minute or two and we should have been too late," was the gentleman's remark.

For answer, the lady threw back the hood of her cloak, and revealed to his astonished gaze the features, not of Maisie, but Gracie Atherstone!

"What on earth is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed.

"Simply that you mistook me for my sister in the doorway last night, Captain Hylton, and your blunder has, I am thankful to say, saved her from herself."

"We have both been very foolish, Miss Atherstone, I admit, but thanks to you nobody need ever know anything of it; there is a train back (just due) that will set you down at your house in less time than the bearers could, and I must continue my journey alone; perhaps it is all for the best," he said, with an attempt at a laugh.

Just at that moment the whistle gave an admonitory shriek, the Captain took his seat, and Gracie found herself alone—not exactly alone though, an elderly man—an Englishman—was standing close by, and having regarded her features intently for a moment, turned away, muttering to himself: "Good God! what an escape!"

On re-entering the house an hour later she managed to get to her room unnoticed, and then, thoroughly overwhelmed by the strain and excitement she had gone through, she gave way to a fit of violent hysterics, culminating later on in the day in an attack of brain fever, from which she did not recover for several weeks.

When she regained consciousness for the first time, she was aware that her sister was sitting by her side, and, dazed as she was, she was impressed with the look of affectionate solicitude on her face, so totally different to what she had ever seen before.

"Don't talk, darling—at least, not yet; try and go to sleep again."

Poor child, she was too weak to make any resistance, and quietly did as she was told. "The crisis is past," the doctor said when he next saw her; "all she wants now is to recover strength. If there is any trouble on her mind—and from what I could gather in her moments of delirium there is—try and set it right."

From what had dropped in disjointed sentences from her sister's lips at various times, during the time the fever was at its height, she knew well enough what was ever present in her mind, and apart from that, had she not received a humble letter from Captain Hylton, explaining the whole thing.

One day when Gracie seemed strong enough to bear it, she made an open confession of her folly, and kissed her passionately at the conclusion. "You have been a guardian angel to me, Gracie, and I can never be sufficiently thankful to you. Let us never mention it again, dear; we will forget it ever happened."

"Are there any letters for me, Maisie?"

"Yes, dear, one—it came the day after you were taken so ill. Here it is."

The sick girl's face lighted up with pleasure as she recognised her lover's handwriting, and with trembling fingers she opened the envelope. It contained only a short note, but before she had read it through, her whole figure trembled convulsively, and then with a cry, as if in an agony of pain, she swooned away into a dead faint.

Mechanically the watcher took up the note, and this is what she read:

"I cannot, will not, believe it, but my uncle says he is sure he was not mistaken, and that the day before yesterday he saw you at Khirkee Station, in the early morning, with Captain Hylton, and that he even heard him say to you—but no, I will not repeat it; there must, I know, be some awful mistake, which a line from you can immediately clear up. Write me such a letter that I can show him.

Yours always lovingly, CHARLIE."

The letter dropped from her hands. After a while Gracie recovered from her faintness, but there was in her eyes a look that seemed to chill her sister to the very marrow. The shock had been too much for her, and although in course of time, as the doctor had predicted, she pulled through, her mind remained a blank. Gracie Atherstone was a perfectly harmless, but nevertheless incurable, lunatic.

PETER PARR.

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GOLDEN STAR

A ROMANCE

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

How the Soul of Golden Star Came Back.

When the two chairs had been brought in and placed according to my orders, I rose from my throne and led Joyful Star to the one on my left hand and placed her in it, still silent with the wonder and perplexity of what she had seen and heard since her eyes were opened. Then, seating myself again, I bade Tupac summon the Children of the Blood to take their places, and presently he ushered them in from the chambers that opened out of the great hall on either hand at the other end.

There were three score of them, the heads of the families of Ayllos whose blood was the purest and whose descent was most direct from the old nobility of my own days. Each of them, too, under the outward husk of his forlorn and degraded state had preserved unsullied the ancient faith and traditions of the Sacred Race, and against all appearances had steadfastly hoped for the fulfilment of the promises that had been given in the olden times. More than this, too, each had treasured, as a miser hoards his gold, the ever-growing legacy of hate which the oppression and contempt of the Spaniards and their meaner descendants had heaped up from generation to generation against the long-awaited day of vengeance which, as but two or three in that strange company alone knew, was now so near at hand.

Ever since I had revealed myself to them in the Hall of Gold they had been working for the end in view with the swift, subtle arts known only to those of their race, and already, from Quito in the north to Santiago in the south, tidings had gone forth that the day of deliverance was approaching, and that ere long the Rainbow Banner would be raised by the hands of him for whom the Children of the Sun had waited.

Each of the fathers of the people was dressed, as Tupac was, in the long forbidden garb of the ancient nobility, and each as he entered stopped in the centre of the hall and paid his homage before he went to his seat. Then when all were seated I ordered that the strangers should be brought in, and they were led into the midst of the silent assembly with their eyes still bandaged. Over Golden Star's head a veil had been thrown hiding her face, for it was my purpose that it should not be seen for the present, and how strangely this purpose worked you shall soon see.

As she came up the middle of the hall, following Tupac who was leading her as obedient as a little child, I descended from the throne and went to meet her and led her to the seat on my right hand and placed her in it. Francis Hartness, the Professor, and Djama I left standing in the middle of the hall, each with one of Tupac's chosen guards beside him. When Golden Star was seated I stood up in front of the throne and said to those assembled, speaking in the ancient tongue:

"Sons of the Blood and Fathers of the Oppressed, you know already how the promise that was made by our Father the Sun through the lips of his high priest, in the days when first the oppressors came, has been in part most faithfully and marvellously fulfilled. I—Vilcaroya, son of Huayni-Capac, son of the great Yupanqui-Inca, before whose throne-seat I am now standing alive in your presence, am he of whom it was said that one who should pass from life to life through the shadows of death, should grasp the sceptre of the divine Manco, and restore the ancient glory of the Children of the Sun. And with me, as you know, there was another, at whose call and for love of whom I dared the ordeal of the death-sleep and swore the oath which I have returned to the world of living men to fulfil. I have already given you some proof that I am what I say I am, for I have revealed to you secrets which were buried in the grave with me and in those faithful hearts which have been pulseless now for many generations.

I descended from the throne and went to meet her.

"But now, that all things may be made plain to you and that no doubts may remain in your hearts to hinder the working of our sacred purpose, I have brought here before you witnesses of the wonders that have been worked—even those who wrought them themselves, that their own lips may tell you the story, and with them I have brought yet another witness who, though she cannot speak to you in our ancient tongue of which our Father, for his own wise purposes, has deprived her during her long sleep, will yet in her own person and even with silent lips be witness enough that I have not lied to you. Now let the eyes of the strangers be uncovered and their mouths opened that they may see and speak."

Even as the words left my lips they were obeyed, and at the same time I stretched out my right hand and raised the veil from the head of Golden Star and unloosed the bandage from her eyes.

A deep murmur of wonder ran round the hall; a sharp cry of amazement broke from Djama's lips, and the two others stared blankly about them. Then I raised my left hand to command silence, and, still speaking the ancient speech and pointing with my right hand to Golden Star, said:

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"This, O Fathers of the People, is she who drank the death-draught with me. This is Cory-coyllur, daughter of Huayni-Capac and sister of the long-ago murdered Huascar, and my sister, too, since her great father was mine also. With her, as the tradition has told you, I plighted the marriage-troth before the altar in the Sanctuary of the Sun, and of that troth I would speak to you now. Such marriage is no longer lawful in the world to which we have returned, and in token of this our Father the Sun has sent this other likeness of Golden Star who sits upon my left hand to tell me that it may not be, and to make the message surer it has pleased him also to put into my heart a love for her differing from, though not greater than that which I have borne for Golden Star, and if my Father who has given me this love shall also look with kindness upon my longing, then Joyful Star, as I have named her, shall be my coya* and my queen, and Golden Star shall be her sister and mine, and I doubt not that in his own good time our Father will send her a fitting mate, that her heart may not be empty nor her life lonely."

Then I raised my left hand to command silence.

As I said these last words I saw the eyes of all who were sitting in the chairs turn as if moved by one impulse and rest on Francis Hartness, standing strong and stately in the midst of the little group in the middle of the hall, overtopping the others by nearly a span, and crowned with his curling golden hair; and as I, too, looked at him a new thought came into my mind and I spoke aloud again and said:

"Yes, Brothers of the Blood, I read your thought. The stranger from the land which is the greatest of all lands in the world of to-day is a true son of the Sun, though not of our blood, for his heart is clean and his tongue is straight and his arm strong, and perchance it may please our Father to bring about that which he has put into our hearts."

At this another murmur ran round the hall and every head was bowed in assent.

Now all this time the three Englishman had been standing patiently in the midst of the hall, looking about them at its splendours, and waiting till I should speak to them, for the Professor knew enough of the Quichua tongue to follow what I had been saying, and had told the others that I was speaking of them. Now I spoke to them in English and told them what I had brought them to the throne-room for, and then I had chairs placed for them at the top of the hall to my left hand.

When they had taken their places I asked the Professor to speak in Spanish to those assembled, and tell them whether or not the story of my return to life was true, and whether or not Golden Star had been found where Anda-Huillac and the priests had placed her, and had been like me restored to life by the arts of Djama his friend. This he did in few straight words, and after him Djama rose at my bidding and told them also what he had done. When he had finished I took the Llautu from my head and raised it above me with outstretched arms and said in a loud voice:

"If you, O Children of the Blood and the sons of the ancient Race, believe now that I am in truth Vilcaroya, son of Huayni-Capac, and lawful heir of the divine Manco from whom all the Incas of our race draw their royal blood, then bid me re-crown myself, and, so doing, swear to take me for your lord as my father was the lord of your fathers, or if any shall have yet doubt in his heart let him speak now or for ever be silent."

Then with one accord they rose from their seats and came before me and prostrated themselves on the shining pavement of the throne-room and began to chant in a low, soft tone the Song of Homage with which of old the new-crowned Incas had been hailed generation after generation, Sons of the Sun and lords of life and death throughout the Land of the Four Regions.

And now a wondrous thing happened. As I stood there facing the prostrate throng, lowering the Llautu on to my head, I heard a low sharp cry beside me on my right hand. I turned half round and there I saw Golden Star staring at me with eyes burning with the light that shone through them from her new-awakened soul.

Her hands were clasped to her temples, pushing back her thick bright hair from her forehead. Her face was flushed and her half open lips were working as though they were striving to shape some long-forgotten words. At the instant that the Llautu touched my brows she rose to her feet.

A cry burst from her lips and went ringing down the hall, and the next moment she had thrown herself forward and I had caught her in my arms. As I did so our eyes met and our hearts looked at each other through them. In that one burning glance the mists of the long years were melted; all things else were forgotten, and for the moment we stood alone—the children of a long-dead generation—in the solitude that our strange fate had made about us. Then her lips moved, not dumbly this time, and in a voice that woke who shall say how many memories in my heart she said:

"Have they awakened us, my lord? Tell me how long we have slept, my Vilcaroya. It seems long to me, and I have had strange dim dreams, and thought I was [not one, but two, and that one of my selves was your sister and the other was your coya and queen. It was strange, was it not, to dream like that?"

A cry burst from her lips.

"Not so strange but that it may be true, O my Sister, Golden Star," I said, my wonder for the moment overcome by a new hope that uprose within me at her words. "Stranger things than that have happened since we fell asleep together in the distant days that are no more. See, Nusta mi, here is your other self, the living shape of that sister-soul of yours, who has watched over you and cared for you and loved you since you drew the first breath of your new life. She cannot speak our tongue, for she is the daughter of another age than ours, but she has taught me hers and I will speak for you."

As I said this I took her hands from where they rested on my shoulders and led her to the seat of Joyful Star, who was standing in front of it with one hand on the arm of her

*The Queen-Consort of the Inca, as distinguished from the many hers whom the ancient laws allowed him to marry.

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chair and the other one clasped to her heart, her face white with fear and her eyes wide with wonder.

"What has happened, Vilcaroya?" she said, in a voice so low that it was almost a whisper. "Has her memory come back, and does she believe herself to be your—your wife?"

As she forced the last word from her hesitating lips I saw the hot blood flow into her cheeks, and a new light that shot like a dart of fire into my heart leapt into her eyes.

"No," I said, with a smile that was quickly answered by one that came unawares to her lips. "She calls herself my sister, and me her lord, and says that she has dreamed that she is not one but two, and that her other sister-self is Vilcaroya's wife and queen. Now if that dream may be the truth, tell her so."

And with that I took her hand gently from where it rested on the chair and laid Golden Star's in it.

"But—I cannot speak your language and she wouldn't understand me," she said softly, with one swift glance at me and another longer look at Golden Star's smiling face, so wondrous like her own.

"There is another speech than that of the tongue," I said, "which all men understand."

"Yes," she said, and then she drew Golden Star gently to her and kissed her.

CHAPTER XXII.

Seen by the Starlight.

All this while the Ayllos had remained silent and prostrate before the throne, none daring to raise their heads till I bade them, and the three Englishmen sat still, hearing what I had said to Joyful Star and her answer to it, and yet neither speaking nor rising from their seats, each full of his own thoughts and not caring to betray his feelings by any rash word that he might speak in the wonder of the moment. But now I turned with my heart full of gladness and new hope, and said in a voice in which my gladness seemed to sing like a bird in the morning sky:

I led Golden Star back to her chair.

"Rise up, Brothers of the Blood, and look upon your lord and rejoice with him, for our Father the Sun has looked kindly upon him and filled all his life with light. He has given back memory and speech to Golden Star, his daughter, and put it in to the heart of Joyful Star, her other sister-self, to love her and to make plain that which might else have been dark."

Then they all rose to their feet and saluted me and paid their homage to Golden Star and Joyful Star as well, and then I waved them to their seats, and when they had gone I led Golden Star back to her chair, and then I called Djama to me, and when he came and stood before me I said:

"You have seen what has happened and you have heard the words that have been said. You see now that there is no need for Golden Star to go to England. Therefore it remains but for you and for your friends to take the treasure that is yours and for us to say farewell."

"And Ruth?" he asked. "You know, of course, that that will mean farewell to her also."

I could see that he was ill at ease, and that his words were not the words that his true thoughts would have spoken. As I looked at him I saw that his eyes shifted and wandered from my gaze, and I said coldly:

"Much has happened since we last spoke of this. It will be for Joyful Star herself to say whether she will bid me farewell or not. Is she not free to go or stay as she pleases? I say now when I shall command the treasure to be taken out of the Hall of Gold for you and where you wish it to be placed."

"I must ask you to give me time to think about that and talk it over with the Professor," he said, "for we have no means of taking such an immense amount of gold to the coast and getting it on board ship without suspicion."

"Go then," I said, "and speak with him, but remember that it must be done quickly, for ere many days are passed there will be war in the land, and neither your lives nor your gold will be safe."

"I will take good care of that," he said in a tone whose strangeness told me more than his words, and with that he turned away and sat down beside the Professor with the thoughts that were within his heart still unspoken. As soon as he had gone back to his seat I called Francis Hartness to me and set him beside me on the right hand of the throne, and then I told who he was and showed that he was well skilled in those new arts of warfare which had taken the place of our ancient methods, and how he had promised to use his knowledge for me and lead my armies into battle, hazarding his own life on the chance of our success; and when I had said this I named him leader of all those who should range themselves under the Rainbow Banner when the day of battle came, and bade all present obey his orders and enforce obedience to them even as though his commands were my own.

Then I bade Francis Hartness himself speak all that was in his mind freely and without fear of betrayal concerning the war that was soon to be waged between the rival factions of our oppressors and the means that were to be used to turn their strife to our own account, and this he did, speaking in fluent Spanish and in short clear sentences, as a man of action and a soldier should speak.

He told how he had made himself acquainted with the forces on both sides, and how, with the help of Tupac, he had sounded the feelings of those by whom the fighting would have to be done and had found them willing to leave the service of the schemers who sought to make themselves tyrants over the land and fight for those whose purpose it was to restore the ancient rule and give liberty to all their lives as they thought best and to win for themselves as many of the gifts of the All-Father as they were able to do. He told, too, how he had sent many messages over the lightning wires to his own country, bidding friends like himself in war to come out as quickly as might be to find the fortune that awaited them, yet saying nothing of war but only of gold that was to be had for the taking.

When he had finished I bade Tupac summon all who were present to the foot of the throne, and then I spoke to them of the plans that I had made with Francis Hartness in all their details, and showed them how each, according to his opportunities, could give his help in carrying them out, and then, as by this time the night was far spent and there was yet work of another sort to do, I sent them back to their seats, and, calling Ruth and Golden Star to me, I bade them follow me, and led the way down the hall and through one of the passages at the end until I brought them to a chamber which Tupac and his comrades had already prepared for them by my orders, and here I left them to take their rest together, promising to return in the morning.

When I got back into the throne-room Djama asked me whither I had taken his sister, and I told him what I had done, saying that the hour was now too late for us to return to our home on the other side of the valley, and that, moreover, it was needful for us to go back to the Hall of Gold to make a proper count of the treasure and to let him and the Professor swear their oaths of secrecy in the presence of the fathers of my people.

Then I left him, looking much more ill at ease than such tidings should have made him feel, and told Tupac in the ancient tongue to take three of his companions and go and do that which it was now time to do. So he went and chose his men and departed through the bronze doors by which

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we had entered the hall. After that I named a guard to remain all night in the hall and bade the rest go and put on their everyday clothing, and I, too, went back into the chamber behind the throne and changed my imperial garments for the others that I had put off.

Then I ordered the torches and candles to be extinguished, all saving a few that were left for the guards, and then the eyes of Djama and the Professor were bandaged afresh, though those of Francis Hartness, he being now one of us and devoted to our cause, were left open; and when this was done the lanterns were lit and I led the way into the ante-chamber of the throne-room where the bronze doors still stood open as Tupac had left them.

I stood by them till the last man had passed out, then I went through and closed them. Then I followed the rest and again placed myself at their head. But when we reached the end of the straight passage, instead of turning the revolving pillar which closed the entrance of the winding passage leading to the Hall of Gold, I sought about with my lantern on the floor until I found three marks in the shape of a triangle in one corner of a great square slab of stone, and, taking a long staff which one of the men carried, I placed the end on the triangle and, calling two others to help me, we bore downwards with all our weight, and when we had thrust awhile on the staff the corner of the slab sank into the floor and it turned on a diagonal axis until it stood upright, leaving a three-cornered space large enough for a man's body to pass through easily. Then I made a sign to one of the Ayllos and said:

I sought about with my lantern on the floor.

"Anahuac, take your lantern down there and light the way down the steps."

"Truly there are no secrets in the land hidden from the eyes of our lord!" he said, glancing round in wonder at the rest, and then he lowered himself with his lantern into the hole and disappeared.

Then I bade the rest follow him one by one, and so all went down, I going last with Francis Hartness, who helped me to put the stone back into its place.

Our way now led along a rough-hewn gallery that sloped gently upwards for some twelve hundred paces, and at the end of it there was a little chamber measuring some twenty feet each way and having no apparent outlet, but in the middle of one of the walls there was another of the cunningly constructed revolving stones which our ancient masons ever used to bar their secret ways, and this three of our men, working as I told them, turned on its hinge, and through the opening that was thus made we passed out in single file to a little rock-walled valley over which the stars were shining.

The door was closed behind us, and dust and dirt was rubbed over the thin lines which marked where it fitted into the rock, and then we extinguished our lanterns and passed out of the valley on to the pampa.

The place where we had come out was about a thousand paces from the walls of the Sacsahuaman. We halted on the plain and I gave my last orders to the Ayllos. Then we set out in the direction of the fortress, and as we went, one by one my followers disappeared silently into the hall darkness about us till at last only four of them were left two leading Djama and two the Professor.

I had been talking of many things with Francis Hartness on the way, and showing him how in the olden times we had made use of the secret passages such as those he had already seen, and when he saw that we had come out by a way different to that which we had entered he asked me the reason of it, and I answered him in a low voice and said:

"Because the other way is closed. Have patience a little while and you shall see why."

Then we went on our way in silence until we came to the edge of the valley in which the Sayacusca stands. Here I halted and whispered a few words to the men who were leading Djama and the Professor. They slipped off their ponchos and threw them over the heads of their prisoners, for such the two were now to be for the present. I heard a muffled cry from Djama, and I went to him and put my hand on his shoulder and said in a whisper:

"Keep quiet and lie down. These men have knives and will use them at my bidding."

Then they pulled him and the Professor down, and they lay quiet, knowing that their lives were in my hands. Then I lay down on the edge of the valley, signing to Francis Hartness to come and lie beside me. Then I pointed into the valley and bade him watch. Presently in the dim light we made out figures moving about the rock and caught every now and then the glint of the star rays along thin lines of polished metal:

"Rifle barrels!" he whispered. "What are they doing here? I didn't know that your men had any weapons yet."

Then I pointed to the valley and bade him watch.

"No," I said, "those are in the hands of soldiers from Cuzco. The time has come sooner than I thought for, and yet not too soon. You will see the first blow struck for the freedom of my people before to-morrow's sun rises."

(To be continued.)

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A Family Tragedy

"I TELL you it is the scandal of Paris. For the last fortnight the name of your wife has been coupled with that of Abinadab Gotch, the Jew money-lender of Versailles."

He who spoke these words was a subject of the Tsar, young, of good looks, and honest countenance, in the employ of the Russian Embassy at the French capital. His words were directed to young Philip Carson, junior partner in the firm of Doré, Boissais, et Cie., of Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles.

The hour was eleven of the forenoon, and the two men were leisurely ensconced before a blazing fire in the card-room of their club, the name of which, so far as the present chronicler is concerned, shall remain undisclosed.

It was a fête day, and the great offices and shops were all closed. From outside came the sounds of tumult and the loud guffaws of a boisterous crowd surrounding a couple of half-drunken, mud-bespattered orators, who were haranguing the mob, and also each other, from one and the same statue in the square.

For a moment Carson did not reply, then springing up he took hold of the young diplomat and dragged him from the couch before he realised what was taking place, and flung him on the hearthstone.

"You lying scoundrel," he exclaimed fiercely. Then he strode out of the room, unwittingly leaving his indiscreet acquaintance on the floor, his left temple having come into violent contact with the sharp corner of the mantelpiece.

Philip Carson was a young Englishman who had at one time acted as the London representative of the firm of Doré, Boissais, et Cie. Through unceasing energy during a period of some five years, he had been the means of bringing so much additional business to the house, that his employers had offered him a partnership in their firm, a post which he gladly accepted.

Some six years before the enactment of the incidents above recorded, he had married Marie Violetta, the only daughter of Baron Alphonse Garnaud, a young, fair-headed and exquisitely beautiful French girl, who ever since their union had been a most devoted and loving helpmate.

They were an ideal couple, so their neighbours said, and certainly, judging from outward appearances, none could have been more happy. The young wife had borne her husband one child, a flaxen-haired little body whom they had christened Blanche Marguerite, but whom they used to call their white flower.

On quitting the club premises, Carson went straight to his home. His wife was away, having gone on a visit to some friends in another quarter of Paris, and was not to return until the following day. He himself had been to Lyons on a matter of business, and had come back unexpectedly just twenty-four hours before his time.

On reaching his flat in the Rue de Fayette, he shut himself in his study, and threw himself on the sofa in a frenzy. For a time he was mad. Beads of perspiration burst forth across his forehead. He could neither reason nor reflect, and the *déjeuner* was left untouched.

Of a jealous nature, could he have got hold of Abinadab Gotch it would surely have gone ill with the usurer, guilty or not. At length, obtaining control of himself, he unlocked the study door and proceeded to his wife's room.

For an instant the man hesitated. He had never pried into his wife's private recesses before. But the undiplomatic Russian diplomat was not the only one who had helped rumour in its flight. The ghoul whose breath is slander had seized the oppontunity and stalked abroad.

Carson had received two anonymous letters in the past week, advising him of a possible understanding between his wife and the Hebraic Shylock, and one up-to-date journal devoted to the collection and circulation of scandal had more than hinted at it.

But the thing was preposterous, he argued to himself. How could his beautiful Violetta, happy, and with nothing to wish for, find any attraction in a villainous *roué* of some three score years and ten of the stamp of Abinadab Gotch? he asked himself for the five hundredth time. Besides, he himself had been in the company of the Jew somewhat considerably of late and had noticed nothing. No; the idea was absurd. He would not believe it of his Violetta. It was too cruel.

While he stood in front of the wardrobe there passed through his mind these things. All at once his eye became fixed on a small scrap of paper which was partly sticking out from beneath the fender. As if impelled by some irresistible power, Carson rushed to the fireplace, seized the scrap, and straightened it out with both hands. A look of intense terror spread over his handsome face, his lips whitened, and he reeled backwards to the bed. Then he seemed to recover himself and glanced at the slip once more. The words he read were these:

". . . necessary if you would save yourself to be at Versailles to-morrow. Meet me at the station at 11.30. You must go through with this business as I have helped you—it's a matter of hard cash for both.—Yours, ma chère, ABINADAB."

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Carson's eyes were riveted to the fatal scrap. He clutched nervously at the old wooden bedpost, a wild look in his grey eyes. Presently there was a gentle tap at the door, and from a tiny voice there came the request:

"What is the matter with papa?"

Carson did not answer, and the child entered.

At length Carson's senses returned to him, and he took the baby in his arms, pressed her to his breast, and sobbed.

"Where is mamma?" asked the wee one, laughing unconcernedly, while the father wept again, as many have done before and since at the thought of a wife's dishonour.

Carson put down the little mite gently on to the bed and fled. The babe was tired, and she slept and dreamt of pleasant things. The father took down his hat from the peg in the hall, went out of his home, and took train to Versailles in the pursuit of an apparently guilty wife.

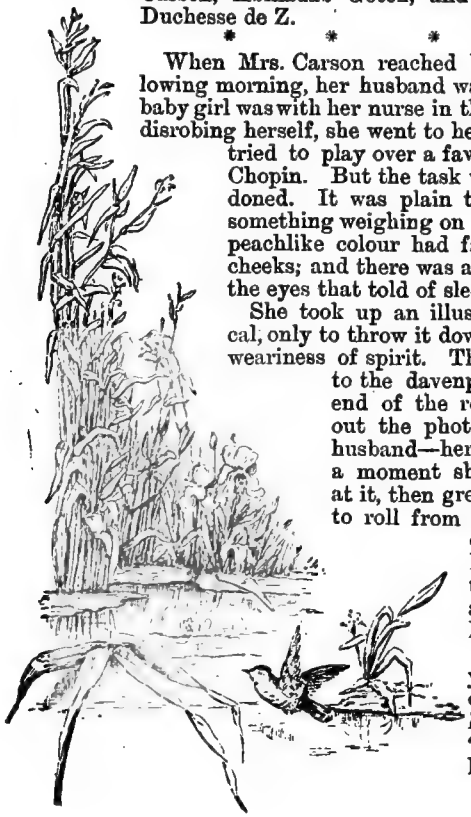
It was twelve o'clock. At half past eleven his wife had an appointment—it was clear enough in writing—with a blackguard of a Jew money-lender, who in his time had wrung the life-blood from a thousand dupes, and filled the Morgue time and again.

As Carson wandered listlessly from one street in Versailles to another, a carriage drawn by a pair of greys hove in sight; and, thinking he recognised one of the occupants, he withdrew up a narrow court-way. The vehicle drew up across the way.

Alas, the little scap of paper, which had only come into his hands through the untidiness of a maid, was no false prophet. It had proved only too true, and he would have to apologise to the Russian for the insult and the injury. The carriage contained the wife of Philip Carson, Abinadab Gotch, and the notorious Duchesse de Z.

* * * *

When Mrs. Carson reached home the following morning, her husband was out, and the baby girl was with her nurse in the park. After disrobing herself, she went to her boudoir and tried to play over a favourite tune by Chopin. But the task was soon abandoned. It was plain that there was something weighing on her mind. The peachlike colour had faded from her cheeks; and there was a heavy look in the eyes that told of sleepless nights.



She took up an illustrated periodical, only to throw it down out of sheer weariness of spirit. Then she walked to the davenport in the far end of the room, and took out the photograph of her husband—her Philip. For a moment she gazed sadly at it, then great tears began to roll from the large blue eyes, and she kissed the portrait passionately between her sobs.

"Philip," the young wife cried aloud in her grief, "if he only knew."

There was no echo there; no comforter.

Presently the hall door banged, and there was a commotion downstairs. Half a minute passed, and her husband was carried in by a *concierge* and *gendarme*, his face haggard and his eyes bloodshot. The men placed their burden on the sofa and withdrew, the police officer merely remarking:

"Shot through the lungs, madame. A case of death."

Carson had fought the Russian diplomat, and fallen at the second shot.

In an instant the wife was at her husband's side.

"What is the matter, my Philip?" she cried madly.

But the man only motioned her away. With a supreme effort he raised himself to a sitting posture, and hoarsely asked:

"Where were you yesterday, Violetta?"

"At the de Bensaude's, of course. Why do you ask? But let me send for a physician."

"Were you nowhere else?" inquired Carson, who was evidently in great pain.

There was a pause. It was a terrible conflict between truth on the one side and deceit on the other; but, for once, the former conquered.

"Yes," answered Violetta at length; "but I decline to say where."

"I saw you at Versailles. So I am second to Abinadab Gotch." He smiled grimly, and added: "It is over between us, Violetta."

Mrs. Carson was dumfounded. For a short space she stood rooted to the floor, then, regaining control of herself, she confessed:

"Yes, I was at Versailles. But I have not dishonoured your name. I swear it, Philip."

"It is a lie," shouted the man brutally. "You have wrecked the life of one you swore to honour and obey. Don't you know that your connection with the Hebrew Gotch is the common talk of the town, and I have been fool enough to turn a deaf ear to it?"

"On my honour I am innocent, Philip. I have saved your name."

"Why, I myself saw you enter a club-house, notorious for card-sharping, with a man who has just been blackballed from a low turf club."

This seemed to sting the woman to the quick. She drew back as if struck, and, vouchsafing no reply, rang the bell and retired to her bedroom. In a moment a woman's heart was turned to steel against her will. Carson was carried to his room, and a surgeon was soon in attendance.

Meanwhile the young wife in her own apartment, her eyes dimmed with tears, had formed her own resolve. While hastily dressing herself, she was interrupted by the entrance of her maid bringing in the coffee. With her came the little Blanche.

"Mamma, daddie loves you," said the small one, sweetly unconscious. "Look, mamma, my dollie's broke!"

"Hush! little angel," said the mother, emptying with faltering hand the contents of a package into the coffee.

But the little prattler paid no heed.

"He loves you," continued the baby voice; "he told me so. What is the matter with daddie, mamma?"

The weeping mother let the question go unanswered, but kissed her child.

"Mother is going out, love," she said, gently stroking the golden hair the while. "Baby must take this to papa. Tell papa mother loves him always."

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And the parent handed the cup to her little one, kissed her on the forehead, and went out of the house. Reflection cast upon the honour of a pure woman is in her eyes second only to the guilt itself.

Twenty minutes later Philip Carson breathed his last, death, according to the physician, arising through loss of blood occasioned by a shot wound.

The following day the body of Marie Violetta Carson was found by a lighterman in the waters of the Seine. It was a case of suicide.

* * * * * * *

Only three persons ever knew the particulars relating to the wreck of Philip Carson's home. One of these was Abinadab Adler, alias Gotch, now dead; the second was Jeanne Miannay, also dead, a cousin of Mrs. Carson, who, whilst a hospital nurse in Calcutta, had received a letter from her relative, presumably written only a few moments before she put her rash resolve into execution.

The third person is the present chronicler, who, by virtue of an acquaintance with all the parties, was taken into the confidence of Jeanne Miannay, on her death-bed in a fever ward in an East African military hospital. Shortly, here are the sad facts:

Entirely unknown to his wife, Carson, in an unfortunate moment, had formed the acquaintance of Abinadab Gotch, or Adler, who was, though not ostensibly, the proprietor of numerous gambling establishments throughout the gay capital.

Although in receipt of a steady income from his business, Carson was wishful to get richer more rapidly than legitimate trading allowed, with the very natural result that he soon became heavily in debt, and the time came when, in the event of further losses ensuing, he would have to sell up his home, quit Paris, which had made him both wealthy and a pauper, and face ruin.

Just when the outlook was at its blackest, Violetta learnt the terrible position of her husband from an outside source. It was at this juncture that she determined to help him, though such was her nature she dared not confess what she knew.

Now in Paris there are to this day clubs where ladies of gentle birth, the mothers of little children, congregate to win or lose money in games of chance. With the exception of the staff, no males are admitted.

Men of the most abandoned description manage these places; yet, notwithstanding the general vileness of the surroundings, the thirst for gambling is so abnormal amongst some women that they do not stand on the least ceremony.

With the object of winning money, and thereby saving her husband from disgrace, the young wife and mother became a frequenter of one of these plague-spots. It happened that Abinadab Adler, alias Gotch, was the owner of the club selected, and Abinadab, true to his nature, forthwith made love to Mrs. Carson, well knowing that she was the consort of the man he had brought to the verge of ruin.

Violetta did not repulse him, nor did she encourage him; he was permitted to make love at a distance. He had robbed her husband, argued the wife; why should he not be robbed in his turn? Besides, so far, she had lost heavily at the tables.

The result was, the Jew grew more and more infatuated, and began to make presents of money to the object of his affections. Then, after weeks of fearful degradation and insult, after weeks of toil in an atmosphere that was loathsome to her, fortune smiled on Violetta, and she went home one day a sad and a rich woman.

It was then that her husband, for the love of whom she had laboured and suffered so much, brought her faith into question, with the result we know.

Love limits discretion, but Violetta, pure in mind and body, went to her death the saviour of the family name. The debts were paid.

Philip Carson drank the poisoned coffee handed to him by his own child.

Blanche Marguerite—Sister Blanche—is now dead to the world. She has made her home in a convent in South Australia, and spends her time in prayer.

B. S. K.

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THE KISS.

IT was still quite light out of doors, but inside, with the curtains drawn, and the smouldering fire sending out a dim, uncertain glow, the room was full of deep shadows.

Brantain sat in one of these shadows; it had overtaken him, and he did not mind. The obscurity lent him courage to keep his eyes fastened as ardently as he liked upon the girl who sat in the firelight.

She was very handsome, with a certain fine, rich colouring that belongs to the healthy. She was quite composed as she idly stroked the satiny coat of the cat that lay curled in her lap, and she occasionally sent a slow glance into the shadow where her companion sat. They were talking low, of indifferent things which plainly were not the things that occupied their thoughts.

She knew that he loved her—a frank, blustering fellow, without guile enough to conceal his feelings, and no desire to do so. For two weeks past he had sought her society eagerly and persistently. She was confidently waiting for him to declare himself, and she meant to accept him. The rather insignificant and unattractive Brantain was enormously rich; and she liked and required the entourage which wealth could give her.

During one of the pauses between their talks of the last tea and the next reception, the door opened, and a young man entered whom Brantain knew quite well. The girl turned her face towards him. A stride or two brought him to her side, and bending over her chair—before she could suspect his intention, for she did not realise that he had not seen her visitor—he pressed an ardent, lingering kiss upon her lips.

Brantain slowly rose; so did the girl rise, but quickly; and the newcomer stood between them, a little amusement and some defiance struggling with the confusion in his face.

"I believe," stammered Brantain, "I see that I have stayed too long. I—I had no idea—that is, I must wish you good-bye." He was clutching his hat with both hands, and probably did not perceive that she was extending her hand to him. Her presence of mind had not completely deserted her; but she could not have trusted herself to speak. However, Brantain had by this time reached the door, and before she could attract his attention he had disappeared.

"Hang me if I saw him sitting there, Nattie!" explained the visitor, as the door closed. "I'm awfully sorry. I know it's awkward for you. But I hope you'll forgive me this once. Why, what's the matter?"

"Don't touch me, don't come near me," she returned angrily. "What do you mean by entering the house without ringing?"

"I came in with your brother, as I often do," he answered coldly, in self-justification. "We entered the other way. He went upstairs, and I came in here hoping to find you. The explanation is simple enough, and ought to satisfy you that the misadventure was unavoidable. But do say that you forgive me, Nathalie," he intreated, softening.

"Forgive you! You don't know what you are talking about. Let me pass. It depends upon—a good deal whether I ever forgive you."

At that next reception which she and Brantain had been talking about, she approached the young man with a delicious frankness of manner when she saw him there.

"Will you let me speak to you a moment or two, Mr. Brantain?" she asked, with an engaging but perturbed smile. He seemed extremely unhappy; but when she took his arm and walked away with him, seeking a retired corner, a ray of hope mingled with the almost comical misery of his expression. She was apparently very outspoken.

"Perhaps I should not have sought this interview, Mr. Brantain, but—but, oh, I have been very uncomfortable, almost miserable, since that little encounter the other afternoon. When I thought how you might have misinterpreted it, and believed things"—hope was plainly gaining the ascendancy over misery in Brantain's round, guileless face—"of course, I know it is nothing to you, but for my own sake I want you to understand that Mr. Harvey is an intimate friend of long standing.

"Why, we have always been like cousins—like brother and sister, I may say. He is my brother's most intimate friend, and often fancies that he is entitled to the same privileges as the family. I know it is absurd, uncalled for, to tell you this; undignified, even," she was almost weeping, "but it makes so much difference to me what you think of—of me." Her voice had grown very low and agitated. The misery had all disappeared from Brantain's face.

"Then you do really care what I think, Miss Nathalie? May I call you Miss Nathalie?" They turned into a long, dim corridor, that was lined on either side with tall, graceful plants. They walked slowly to the very end of it. When they turned to retrace their steps, Brantain's face was radiant and hers triumphant.

* * * * *

Harvey was among the guests at the wedding; and he sought her out in a rare moment when she stood alone.

"Your husband," he said, smiling, "has sent me over to kiss you."

A quick blush suffused her face and round polished throat. "I suppose it's natural for a man to feel and act generously on an occasion of this kind. He tells me he doesn't want his marriage to interrupt wholly that pleasant intimacy which has existed between you and me. I don't know what you've been telling him," with an insolent smile, "but he has sent me to kiss you."

She felt like a chess player who, by a clever handling of the pieces, sees the game taking the course intended. Her eyes were bright and tender with a smile as they glanced up into his; and her lips looked hungry for the kiss which they invited.

"But, you know," he went on quietly, "I didn't tell him so; it would have seemed ungrateful; but I can tell you. I've stopped kissing women: it's dangerous."

Well, she had Brantain and his million left. A person can't have everything in this world; and it was a little unreasonable of her to expect it.

E. C. WAGGENER.

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The Cold Lust

Translated from the French by Annie L. Townsend.

WHEN I was a penniless student I lived in a little unknown street, called "La Rue de Lesdiguières." All night I worked in my attic; by day I read in a neighbouring public library. I lived frugally, accepting all the conditions of monastic life, so essential to brain-workers. One single passion drew me from my studious habits, but even that was a study. I used to go about watching the manners of the *faubourg*, its people, and their characteristics. As ill-clad as the workmen themselves, and as careless of decorum, they were never on their guard against me, so I could mingle in the crowds, watch their bargains, hear their disputes as they came back from work.

With me the power of observation was already intuitive, penetrating the soul without neglecting the body, seizing upon outward forms so thoroughly, that it instantly went beyond them, till I had the power of living the very life of the individual I was gauging.

As I listened I seemed wedded to their life. I felt their rags upon my back, I walked with my feet in their tattered shoes; their desires, their wants, all passed into my soul, and my soul passed into theirs. It was the dream of a waking man. To quit my own belongings, to become another than myself by excitement of the moral faculties, and to do this whensoever I willed it—such was my sole distraction. To what do I owe this gift? Is it second sight? Would the abuse of it lead to madness? I have never fathomed the cause of the power. I have it; I use it—that is all.

One day my charwoman came to invite me to be present at her sister's wedding. To give an idea of what the wedding was likely to be, I must explain that I gave this poor woman forty sous a month for making my bed every morning, cleaning my shoes, sweeping my room, and preparing my breakfast. Beyond this she earned ten sous a day at some wretched calling; her husband earned four francs; they had three children, and yet they contrived to be honest. That sort of person interests me. I readily promised to go to the wedding. I looked forward to blending myself with the joy of these people in the way I have described.

All the merry-making took place at a wine-merchant's, in a large room lighted by lamps with tin reflectors, hung with garlands of cut paper, and furnished with wooden benches round the walls. In this room were eighty people tricked out in Sunday best, dancing away for dear life, and all expressing a simple animal pleasure that was contagious.

There were three musical instruments—violin, clarionet, and flageolet—all played by blind men from the asylum of the Quinze-Vingts. Naturally, they did not play Rossini nor Beethoven, but the instant I looked at them I knew the sought-for food of my imagination was found, and my curiosity was stimulated to the highest degree. The violin and flageolet players both had common faces, but that of the clarionet player was one of those phenomena that rivet the eyes of the artist and the philosopher.

Imagine a plaster cast of Dante's face, lighted up with the red glare of an argand lamp and crowned with a forest of silver-white hair. The bitter and melancholy expression of this magnificent head was only ennobled by blindness, for thought reanimated the dead eyes, and fiery gleams seemed to dart from them.

The old man paid very little attention to his playing, but, on the other hand, the dancers cared very little what was played. I felt that the old Homer cherished within himself an Odyssey condemned to oblivion. All the violent passions that govern a man, for good or evil, were present in his nobly chiselled, lividly Italian face.

His grey eyebrows jutted over cavernous eye-sockets, that I dreaded to see lighted with the fire of thought as one dreads to see the torches and the weapons of brigands gleam at the mouth of a cave. There was a lion caged in that body, a lion whose rage was spent with useless beating against the bars. The fire of despair was dead in its ashes, the lava had grown cold, but the furrows, the desolation, a little smoke, told of the violence of the eruption and the ravages of the flames. The thoughts that had moulded the man's appearance were as hot in his soul as they were cold upon his face. At a pause in the music I questioned him:

"What countryman are you—you playing on the clarionet?"

"I am a Venetian," replied the blind man, with a slight Italian accent.

"Were you born blind, or how did you become so?"

"By accident," he replied eagerly.

"Venice is a beautiful city; I always had a fancy to go there," I continued.

"If I went with you, you would go to some purpose,"

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ne replied. His face grew animated, his wrinkles worked, he was much moved.

"Go on with your playing, Doge," said the flageolet. Hope played over his worn face like a blue flame. With a blind man's sixth sense, he felt the interest I took in him.

"Why do they call you Doge?" I asked.

"Their joke. I am a Venetian patrician, and might have been a doge like another."

"What is your name?"

"They write it Canet here," he replied, "but in Italian it is Marco Facino Cane, Prince of Varese."

"A descendant of the famous condottiere whose conquests went to the Duke of Milan?"

"The same," he replied. "In those days Cane's son fled to Venice and was registered on the Golden Book. To-day there is neither book nor Cane." He finished with a violent, rebellious gesture.

"If you were a Venetian senator, you must have been rich. How did you lose your fortune?"

At this question of mine he raised his head as if he were really looking at me—a most tragic action—and answered:

"Through misfortunes."

I stood lost in a dream of Venice and the Adriatic. Facino Cane stopped playing, stood up, and took my arm.

"Let us leave this place!" he said abruptly, and we passed out into the street. Then he spoke again: "Will you guide me to Venice? Will you trust to me? You shall be richer than the ten richest houses of Amsterdam or London; richer than a fairy tale."

He led me on to a solitary quarter, and at last sat down upon a block of stone where the moon poured its light upon his silver hair. The noise of the tumult of the boulevards came to us faintly. It was a fantastic scene.

"I am twenty years old, and you talk to me of millions. Do you think there is any hardship I would hesitate to undergo to obtain them? Don't amuse yourself at my expense on such a subject," I cried.

"May I die without absolution," he swore violently, "if what I am going to tell you is not true. I have been twenty years old, like you; I was rich, handsome, noble. I began my life with the first of follies—love. My love was like a lava flood. Years ago I fell in love with one of the Vendramini, eighteen years old, married to one of the Sagredos, a rich senator twice her age, and wildly in love with his wife. My lady love and I, still innocent as the angels, were talking of love one day, when we were surprised. I was unarmed. He missed me. I sprang upon him and strangled him with my bare hands, wringing his neck like a fowl's.

"They set spies on us, and surprised us in each other's arms."

"I wished to fly with Bianca, but she would not follow me. So much for women! I fled alone. I was indicted, and my goods sequestrated for my heirs. However, I had managed to carry off my diamonds, five rolled pictures by Titian, and all my gold. I went to Milan, where I was not disturbed—my affair did not interest the state.

"Whether woman's fancies influence the unborn child or not, it is a fact that my mother had a passion for gold, and my mania for it amounts to such an intensity of desire, that in all the vicissitudes of my life I have managed to keep some about me. I must handle gold constantly. When I was young I always carried two or three hundred ducats."

As he spoke, the old man drew two ducats from his pocket, and showed them to me.

"I have a special sense for gold as well," he continued; "though I am blind, I stop instinctively before the jewellers' windows. The passion has been my perdition. I became a gambler so as to stake gold. I was not a swindler, so I was swindled. I ruined myself. When my fortune was gone I was seized with a desire to see Bianca. I returned secretly to Venice, found her, and was happy for six months, hidden and cared for by her. I thought to finish my life so. But a suitor of Bianca had suspicions—they have remarkable intuitions in Italy—set spies on us, and surprised us in each other's arms. I did not kill him, but I wounded him seriously. He called his followers and had the place surrounded. I defended myself, and Bianca helped me.

"Formerly, she would not fly with me, but after six months of happiness she wished to die with me, and received several blows. I was overcome, rolled in a cloak and carried in a gondola to a cell containing a deep pit. None of my wounds were mortal. I was condemned to be beheaded, and feigned illness to gain time. I believed myself to be in a cell adjoining the canal; my project was to escape by penetrating the wall and swimming across the canal at the risk of drowning myself.

"Whenever the gaoler brought me food, I read written signs on the wall, like 'Palace Side,' 'Canal Side,' 'Subterranean Side.' With the genius of a caged thing pining for liberty, I succeeded in deciphering with my finger-tips on the surface of a stone an Arab inscription, by which its author informed his successors in the cell that he had taken two stones out of the last course and had dug eleven feet under ground.

"To continue his task it was necessary to heap up on the floor of the cell the earth and mortar produced by the excavation; but even if the warders and superin-

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tendents had not been confident in the construction of the building, which only required an exterior watch, the position of the pits, down to which two or three steps led, made the disposal of the earth easy, so that the gaolers need perceive nothing. The immense task had been in vain, at least for him who had begun it, for its non-completion proved the death of the unknown. To profit by his labour, those prisoners who succeeded him must have known Arabic, but I had studied Oriental languages at the Armenian monastery.

"I worked for a month without any visible result, but while I worked, and when fatigue overpowered me, I heard the sound of gold; I saw gold before me; my eyes were dazzled by diamonds. One night the old sword I was working with touched wood. I sharpened the steel and made a hole in the wood. It was the last night but one that I should spend in prison. I made one final effort; I pierced the wood, and my tool reached nothing on the other side. I applied my eyes to the aperture. I had penetrated the wainscot of a vault, where a feeble light showed me a heap of gold.

"The Doge and one of the Council of Ten were in the vault. What they said informed me that I beheld the secret treasury of the Republic. I was saved! When the gaoler came I proposed to him to permit my flight and to escape with me, carrying off all we could. He agreed. A ship was setting sail for the Levant; all our precautions were taken, and Bianca apprised of our plans. She was to join us at Smyrna. That night the hole in my cell was enlarged, and we stood in the secret treasury of Venice.

"Whenever the gaoler brought me food, I read written signs on the wall."

"What a sight! I have seen four tuns filled with gold. In an adjoining room as much silver was heaped up in two banks on each side, leaving a lane down the middle of the apartment between the piles of coin five feet high. I thought the gaoler would lose his senses; he sang, laughed, danced, and pranced among the gold; I threatened to strangle him if he lost time or made a noise. In his joy he did not see a table where the diamonds were. I fell upon it, and filled my sailor's shirt and trousers' pockets; even then I hardly took one-third of what there was.

"Under the table were bars of gold. I persuaded my companion to take only gold; the pearls and diamonds would betray us, I told him. Great as our greed was we could only carry off two thousand pounds of gold, which necessitated six journeys across the prison to the gondola. The sentinel at the water-gate had been bought with a bag of ten pounds of gold. As for the two gondoliers, they thought they were serving the Republic.

"At daybreak we were off. When we were on the high sea and I recalled that night; when I remembered the sensations I had experienced, and saw again in the imagination the immense treasure of which, according to my calculations, I left behind, thirty millions in silver, twenty millions in gold, and uncounted millions in diamonds, pearls, and rubies, my mind reeled; I had the fever of gold. We disembarked at Smyrna and at once started for France.

"As we were getting on board the French ship Heaven saw fit to rid me of my accomplice. At the moment I did not reflect upon the full extent of this turn of fate over which I rejoiced so much. We had been so completely enervated that we remained entranced without speaking to each other, waiting till we were in safety to enjoy our treasure. No wonder the head was giddy.

"You will see how God punished me. I was not at rest until I had sold two-thirds of my diamonds in London and Amsterdam, and turned my gold-dust into money. For five years I lived hidden in Madrid; then in 1770 I went to Paris under a Spanish name and lived gorgeously.

"Bianca was dead. In the midst of my splendour I was struck with blindness, the result of my life in the Venetian cell, and of which my preternaturally acute vision for gold might have forewarned me. At that time I was in love with a woman to whom I hoped to join my fate; I had told her the secret of my name; she belonged to a powerful family, and I hoped everything from the favour shown me by Louis XV. I trusted the woman, who was a friend of Madame du Barry. She advised me to consult a famous London oculist; but after a few months' sojourn in that city the woman abandoned me, robbing me of my whole fortune and leaving me without resource in the world, for to tell my name was to deliver myself to the vengeance of Venice.

"I spare you the recital of adventures worthy of Gil Blas. The French Revolution came. I was compelled to enter the Quinze-Vingts Asylum, where the woman who had betrayed me had me placed, after keeping me two years at Bicêtre, for insanity. I never have been able to kill her, blind as I am, and am too poor now to hire an avenger. If I had consulted my gaoler, before I lost him, about the situation of my cell, I should have been able to find the treasury again had I returned

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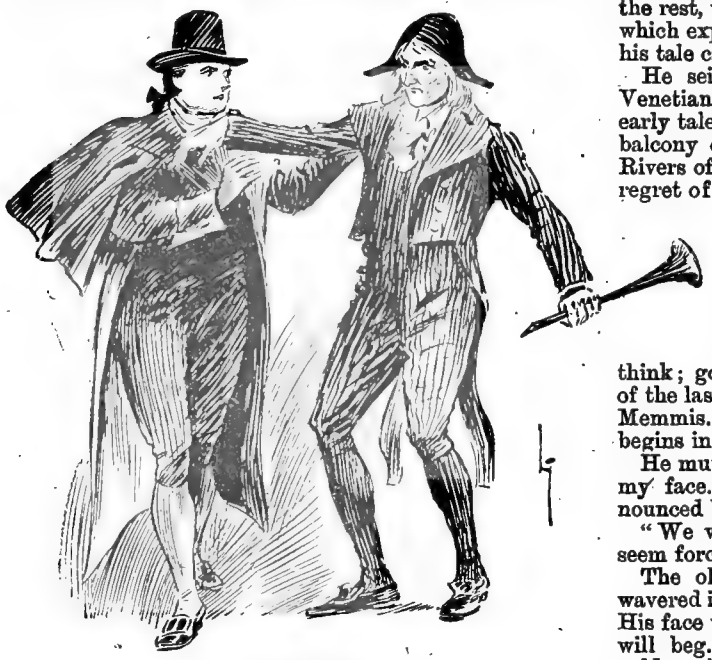
to Venice when the republic was destroyed by Napoleon.

"But now I have found you, the man I have wanted all these years. Come with me to Venice. What if I am blind? I shall find that prison door, for I shall see the gold through the walls, I shall feel it under the waves where it is buried; for though the power of Venice was overthrown, the secret of that treasury must have perished with Vendramino, Bianca's brother, a doge by



He staggered towards me.

whom I hoped my peace would be made with the Ten.

"I have addressed notes to the First Consul, I have proposed a treaty to the Emperor of Austria; both have dismissed me as a madman. Come, let us be off to Venice. We start beggars, but we shall return millionaires. We shall buy back my estate; you will be my heir; you will be Prince of Varese."

Agitated by the wild tale, tempted by the wild scheme, saddened at the sight of that whitened head, hushed by the view of the black water in the Bastile moats—stagnant as the Venetian canals—I was silent. Facino Cane doubtless thought that I looked upon him, like the rest, with contemptuous pity. He made a gesture which expressed all the philosophy of despair. Perhaps his tale carried him back to his happy days in Venice.

He seized his clarionet, and played a melancholy Venetian song—a barcarolle for which he won back his early talent, the inspiration of a patrician beneath the balcony of his lady-love. It was a sort of "By the Rivers of Babylon," the prayer of a banished man, the regret of a lost great name, mingled with a memory of Bianca. My eyes filled with tears. The gold lust reasserted itself; the ruling passion extinguished the reflected light of this beam of youth.

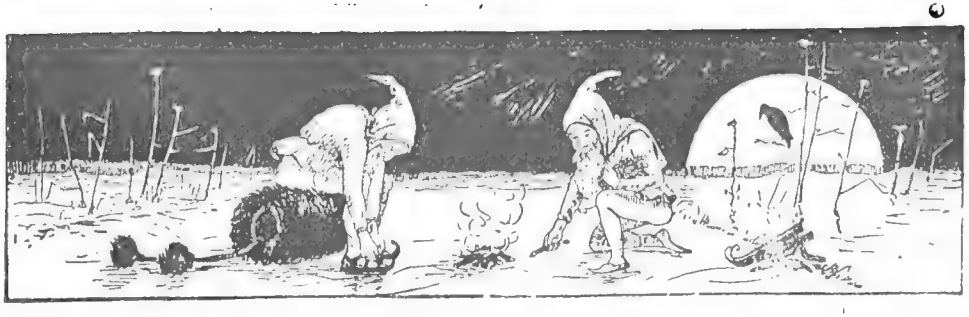
"I am in the treasury," he cried; "asleep or waking, I always see it; I walk there, the diamonds flash. I am not as blind as you think; gold and diamonds light up my night, the night of the last Facino Cane, the last—my title goes to the Memmis. Just Heaven! the murderer's punishment begins in this world. *Ave Maria!*"

He muttered a prayer without removing his eyes from my face. The prayer affected me like a spell pronounced by a wizard.

"We will go to Venice!" I exclaimed. The words seem forced from me by a will other than my own.

The old man rose to his feet. His massive figure wavered in the moonlight. He staggered towards me. His face was on fire. "To-morrow!" he gasped, "we will beg. I am strong, and there is gold ahead—gold——"

He clutched at his throat, beat the air, tottered and fell. I sprang to his assistance. The low night wind wailed, the wedding guests went singing by, and Facino Cane was dead.



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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

3.—Why they didn't Hang Cherokee Hall.

"Now, I don't reckon I ever tells you none about how near we all comes to hangin' Cherokee Hall, do I?"

The old cattleman had a look of interested inquiry as he propounded the above. I gave ready assurance that no such peril of the past to the gentleman named had ever been revealed to me.

"I don't mind onbosomin' myse'f about it," continued my old friend. "It's a misunderstandin', the same bein' Cherokee's fault complete. We don't know him more'n to merely drink with at that epock, an' he's that sly an' furtive in his plays, an' covers his trails so spechul, he nacherally breeds suspicions that when the stage gets to be stood up reg'lar once a week, an' all onaccountable, Cherokee comes mighty close to culminatin' in a rope. Which goes to show that you can't be too open an' free in your game, an' Cherokee would tell you so himse'f.

"This yere tangle I'm thinkin' of ain't more'n a month after Cherokee takes to residin' in Wolfville. He comes trailin' in one evenin' from Tucson an' unfolds a layout an' goes to turnin' faro-bank in the 'Red Light.' No one remarks this partic'lar, which said spectacles is frequent. The general idee is that Cherokee's on the square an' his game is straight, an' of course public interest don't delve no further into his affairs.

"Cherokee himself is one of these yere slim, silent people who ain't talkin' much, an' his eye is one of them sharp greys, like a new bowie.

"It's perhaps the third day when Cherokee begins to struggle into public notice. Thar's a felon whose name's Boone, but who calls himse'f 'The Stingin' Lizard,' been pesterin' around Wolfville mebbe it's a month. This yere Stingin' Lizard is thar when Cherokee comes into camp an' it looks like the Stingin' Lizard takes ag'in Cherokee from the jump.

"Not that this yere Lizard is likely to control public feelin' in the matter; none whatever. He's some onpopular himse'f. He's too toomultuous for one thing, an' he has a habit of shootin' at towerists an' folks he don't know at all, which palls on disinterested people who has dooties to perform.

"About once a week this Lizard man goes an' gets tanked, too, an' then the camp has to set up with him till his visions subsides. Fact is, he's what you all east calls a disturbin' element, an' we makes ready to hang him once or twict; but somethin' comes up an' puts it off, an' we sorter neglects it.

"But, as I say, he takes a notion agin Cherokee. It's the third night after Cherokee gets in, an' he's ca'mly behind his box at the 'Red Light,' when in peramb'lates this yere Lizard. Seems like Cherokee, bein' one of these quiet wolves, fools up the Lizard a lot. He's been hostile an' blood-hungry all day, an' I reckon he all at once recalls Cherokee; an' deemin' of him easy, he allows he'll go an' chew his mane some for relaxation.

"If I was low an' orney like this Lizard, I ain't none shore but I'd be fool'd them days on Cherokee myse'f. He's been peevish an' fretful about his whiskey, Cherokee has, puttin' it up she don't taste right, which not onlikely it don't, but beyond pickin' flaws in his nose-paint, thar ain't much to take hold on about him.

"He's so slim an' quiet besides, thar ain't none of us but figgers this yere Stingin' Lizard's due to stampede him if he tries, which makes what follers all the more impressive.

"So the Lizard comes along into the 'Red Light' whoopin' an' carryin' on by himse'f. Straightway he goes up ag'inst Cherokee's lay-out.

"'I don't buy no chips,' says the Lizard to Cherokee, as he gets opposite. 'I puts money in play, an' when I wins I wants money similar. Thars 50 dols. on the king coppered, an' 50 dols. on the eight open. Turn your kyards, an' turn 'em square. If you don't I'll peel the ha'r an' hide plumb off the top of your head.'

"Cherokee looks at the Lizard sorter soopercilious and indifferent, but he don't say nuthin'. He goes on with the deal, an' the cards comin' that away, he takes in the Lizard's two bets.

"Durin' the next deal the Lizard ain't saying much direct, but keeps cussin' an' wranglin' to himse'f. But he's gettin' his money up all the time, an with 50 dols. he lose on the turn, he's shy mebby 450 dols. at the close.

"'Bein' in the hole about 500 dols.,' says the Lizard in a manner which is a heap onrespectful, 'an' so that a wayfarin' man may not be misled to rooin', I now rises to ask what for a limit do you put on this deadfall, anyhow?'

"'The bridle's plumb off to you, Amigo,' says Cherokee, an' his tones is some hard. I notices it all right enough, because I'm doin' business at the table myse'f at the time, an' keepin' likewise an eye on the game. 'The bridle's clean off for you,' says Cherokee, 'so any notion you entertains in favour of bankruptin' of yourse'f quick may riot right along.'

"'You're dead sure of that?' says the Lizard, with a sneer. 'Now, I reckons a thousand dollar bet would scare this puerile game you deals a-screechin' up a tree or into a hole too easy.'

"'I never like to see no gent strugglin' in the coils of error,' says Cherokee, with a sneer a size larger than the Lizard's. 'I don't know what wads of wealth them pore old clothes of yours conceal, but jest the same I

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tells you what I'll do. Climb right on to the layout, body and soul, an' put a figger on your worthless se'f, an' I'll turn you for the whole shootin' match. You're in here to make things interestin', I can see that, an' I'll jest violate business principles, an' take a night off to entertain you.' An' yere Cherokee lugs out a roll of bills big enough to choke a cow.

"'I goes you if I lose,' says the Stingin' Lizard. Then assoomin' a superior air, he remarks: 'Mebby it's three hours back on the trail when I has misgivin's as to the rectitood of this yere brace you're dealin'. Bein' public spirited that away, in my first frenzy I allows I'll take my gun an' abate it a whole lot. But a ca'mer mood comes on, an' I decides, as not bein' so smoky as a method an' less likely to disturb a peace-lovin' camp, I removes this trap for the onwary by merely bustin' the bank. Thar,' goes on the Stingin' Lizard, at the same time dumpin' a large wad on the layout. 'Thar's even 4,000 dols. Roll your game for that just as it lays.'

"'Straighten up your dust,' says Cherokee, his eyes gettin' a kind of gleam into 'em. 'Straighten up your stuff an' get it somewhere. Don't leave it all spraddled over the scene. I turns for it ready enough, but we ain't goin' to argue none as to where it lays after the card falls.'

"The rest of us who's been buckin' the game moderate an' right cashes in at this an' leaves an obstructed cloth to the Stingin' Lizard. This yere is more caution than good nature. As long as folks is bettin' along in limits, say under 50 dols., thar ain't no shooting likely to ensoo, but whenever a game gets immoderate that away an' the limit's off, an' things is goin' that locoed they begins to play a thusand an' over on a card an' scream for action, gents of experience stand] ready to go to duckin' lead an' dodgin' bullets instanter.

"But to resoom. The Stingin' Lizard lines up his stuff an' the deal begins. It ain't thirty seconds till the bank wins, an' the Stingin' Lizard is the wrong side of the layout from his money. He takes it on onusual ugly, only he ain't sayin' much. He sa'nters over to the bar an' gets a big drink. Cherokee is rifflin' the cards, but I notes he's got his grey eye on the Stingin' Lizard, an' my respects for him increases rapid. I sees he ain't goin' to get the worst of no deal, an' stands ready to protect his game plumb through if this Lizard makes a break.

"'Do you know where I hails from?' asks the Stingin' Lizard, comin' back to Cherokee after he's hid his drink.

"'Which I shorely don't,' says Cherokee; 'I has from time to time much worthless information thrust upon me, but so far I escapes your hist'ry complete.'

"'Where I comes from, which is Texas,' says the Lizard, ignorin' of Cherokee's manner, which is some insultin', 'they teaches the babies two things—never to eat your own beef, an' never let no card thief down you.'

"'Which is mighty thrillin',' says Cherokee, 'as reminesences of your youth, but where did you get action on 'em in Arizona?'

"'Where I gets action won't be no question long,' says the Lizard, mighty truculent. 'I now announces that this yere game is a skin an' a brace. Tharfore, I returns for my money, an' to be frank an' not hold out nuthin' on to you, I returns a-shootin'.'

"It's at this p'int we all who represents the public kicks back our chairs an' stampedes outen range. As the Lizard makes his bluff, his hand goes to his artillery like a flash.

"The Lizard's some quick, but Cherokee's too soon for him. With the first movement of the Lizard's hand he searches out a bowie from some'er back of his neck. I'm so employed placin' myse'f at the time, an' don't discern it none till Cherokee brings it over his shoulder like a stream of white light.

"It's sure great knife work. Cherokee gives the Lizard aige an' p'int, an' all in one motion. Before the Lizard more'n lifts his weapon Cherokee half slashes his gun hand off at the wrist, an' jest as the Lizard begins to wonder at it, he gets the nine-inch blade plump through his neck. He's let out right thar.

"'It looks like I has more of this sort of thing to do,' says Cherokee, an' his tone shows he's half mournin' over it, 'than any sport in the territory; I tries to keep outen this, but that Lizard would have it.'

"After the killin', Enright an' Doc. Peets with Boggs, Tutt, an' Jack Moore, sorter talks it over quiet, an' allows it's all right.

"'This Stingin' Lizard man,' says Enright, 'has been projectin' round lustin' for trouble now mebby it's six weeks. It's amazin' to me he lasts as long as he does, an' it speaks volumes for the forbearin', law-abidin' temper of the Wolfville public. This Lizard's a mighty oppressive person, an' a heap obnoxious, an' while I don't like a knife none myse'f as a trail out, an' inclines to distrust folks who does, I s'pose it's after all partly a matter of taste, an' partly the way your folks bring you up. I leans to the view, gents, that this yere corpse is constructed on the square. What do you all think, Peets?'

"'I entertains ideas similar,' says Doc. Peets. 'Of course, I takes it this cardsharp, Cherokee, aims to bury his game. He nacherally ain't lookin' for the camp to go 'round cleanin' up after him none.'

"That's about how it stands. Nobody finds fault with Cherokee; an' as he ups an' plants the Stingin' Lizard's remainder the next day, makin' the deal with a stained box, crêpe, an' the full regalia, it all leaves the camp with a mighty decent impression. By first drink time in the evenin' of the second day we ain't thinkin' no more 'bout it.

"Now, you all begins to marvel where do we get to the hangin' of Cherokee Hall. We're workin' in towards it now.

"You see, followin' the Stingin' Lizard's jump into the misty beyond—which it's that sudden I offers two to one them angels notes a look of surprise on the Stingin' Lizard's face as to how he comes to make the trip—Cherokee goes on dealin' faro same as usual. As I says before, he ain't no talker nohow; now he says less than ever.

"But what strikes us as onusual is he saddles up a pinto pony he's got over to the corral, an' jumps off every now an' then for two an' three days at a clatter. No one knows where he p'ints to, more'n he says he's due over in Tucson. These yere vacations of Cherokee is all in the month after the Stingin' Lizard gets downed.

"It's about this time, too, the stage gets held up sech a scandalous number of times, it gives people a tired feelin'. All by one man, too. He merely jumps out in onexpected places in an onconsarned way, an' then goes through everything an' everybody, from mail bags to passengers, like the grace of heavin' through a camp meetin'. Nacheral, it all creates a heap of disgust.

"'If this yere industrious hold-up keeps up his lick,' says Texas Thompson, about the third time the stage gets rustled, 'an' heads off a few more letters of mine, all I has to say is my wife back in Laredo ain't goin' to

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onderstand it none. She ain't lottin' much on me, nohow, an' if the correspondence between us gets much more irregular, she's goin' p'intin' out for a divorce. This deal's liable to turn a split for me in my domestic affairs.'

"An' that's the way we all feels. This stage agent was shorely in disrepoot some in Wolfville. If he'd been shakin' up Red Dog's letter bag, we wouldn't have minded so much.

"I never does know who's the first to think of Cherokee Hall. But all at once it's all over camp. Talkin' it over, it's noticed mighty soon that come right to cases, no one knows his record, where he's been, or why he's here. Then his stampedin' out of camp like he's been doin' for a month is too many for us.

"'I puts no trust in those Tucson lies he tells, neither,' says Doc. Peets. 'Whatever would he be shakin' up over in Tucson? His game's yere, an' this theery that he's got to go scatterin' over thar once or twict a week is some gauxy.

"'That's whatever,' says Dan Boggs, who allers trails in after Doc. Peets an' plays the same system emphatic. An' I says myse'f, not findin' no fault with Boggs tharfor, that this yere Peets was the finest eddicated an' levelest-headed sharp in Arizona.

"'Well,' says Jack Moore, who does the rope-work for the stranglers, 'if you all get it settled that this faro gent's turnin' these tricks with the stage mail-bags, the sooner he's swingin' to the windmill the sooner we hears from our loved ones at home. What do you say, Enright?'

"'Why,' says Enright, all thoughtful, 'I reckon it's a case. S'pose you caper over where he feeds, at the O.K. House, an' bring him to us. The signs and signal smokes shorely p'ints to this yere Cherokee as our meat; but, of course, these things has to be done in order. Bring him in, Jack; and, to save another trip, s'pose you brings a lariat from the corral at the same time.'

"It don't take Moore any time to throw a gun on Cherokee where he's consoomin' flap-jacks at the O.K. House, an' tells him the committee needs him at the New York store. Cherokee don't buck none, but comes along passive as a tabby cat.

"'Whatever's the hock card to all this?' he says to Jack Moore. 'Is it the Stingin' Lizard play a month ago?'

"'No,' says Moore, ''tain't quite sech ancient hist'ry. It's stage coaches. Thar's a passel of people down yere as allows you've been ruslin' the mails.'

"Old Man Rucker, who keeps the O.K. House, is away when Moore rounds up his man. But Mrs. Rucker's thar, an' the way that old woman talks to Enright an' the committee is scand'lous. She comes over to the store, too, along of Moore an' Cherokee, an' prances in an' comes mighty near stampedin' the whole outfit.

"'See yere, Sam Enright,' she shouts, wipin' her hands on her bib, 'what be you all aimin' to do? Linin' up, I s'pose, to hang the only decent man in town?'

"'Ma'am,' says Enright, 'this yere sharp is 'cused of standin' up the stage them times recent over by Tucson. Do you know anything about it?'

"'No, I don't,' says Mrs. Rucker. 'You don't reckon now I did it none, do you? I says this, though; it's a heap sight more likely some drunkherd a-settin' right yere on this committee stops them stages than Cherokee Hall.'

"'Woman's nature is that emotional,' says Enright to the rest of us. 'She's incapable of doin' right. While she's the loveliest of created things, still sech is the infirmities of her intellects that gover'ment would bog down in its most important functions if left to woman.'

"'Bog down or not,' says Mrs. Rucker, gettin' red an' heated. 'You fools settin' up thar like a band of prairie dogs don't hang this yere Cherokee Hall. 'Nuther thing, you ain't goin' to hang nobody to the windmill ag'in, nohow. I has my work to do, an' thar's enough on my hands feedin' sech as you alls three times a day without havin' to cut down a corpse outen my way every time I goes for a bucket of water. You all takes notice, now; you don't hang nothin' to the windmill no more. And for this yere Cherokee, he ain't stopped no more stages than I have.'

"'Well, see here,' says Cherokee, who's been listenin' all peaceful, 'let me in on this. What be you all doin' this on? I reckon I'm entitled to a turn for my money.'

"Enright goes on an' lays it off for Cherokee; how he's outen camp every time the stage is robbed, an' the idee is abroad he does it.

"'As the cards lay in the box,' says Cherokee, 'I don't reckon there's much doubt but you all will wind up the deal by hangin' me?'

"'It's shorely five to one that away,' says Enright; 'although I'm bound to say, it ain't none decisive as yet.'

"'The truth is,' says Cherokee, sorter thoughtful. 'I wasn't aimin' to be hung none this autumn. I ain't got time, gents, for one thing, an' has arranged a heap different. In the next place, I never stands up no stages.'

"'That's what they all says,' puts in Boggs, who's a mighty impatient man. 'I shorely notes no reason why we all can't proceed with this yere lynchin' at once. S'pose this Cherokee ain't stood up no stage, I offers 100 dols. to 50 dols., an' leaves it to the culprit himse'f; he's done plenty of other things as merits death. It strikes me thar's a sight of onnecessary talk yere.'

"'If you ain't out workin' the road,' says Doc. Peets to Cherokee, not heedin' of Bogg's petulence, 'these yere stage robbin' times, s'pose you onfold where you was at.'

"'Well, son, not to string this yere story out longer'n three drinks, here is how it is: This Cherokee looks like he's soft-hearted that away, what you calls romantic. An' it seems likewise that shovin' the Stingin' Lizard from shore that time sorter takes advantage an' preys on him. So he gets browsin' 'round the postmaster all casual and puts questions. Cherokee gets a p'int about some yearlin' or other in Tucson this Stingin' Lizard sends money to, an' makes good for, which he finds the same to be true on caperin' over. It's a nephy or some sech play, an' the Stingin' Lizard has the young one staked out over thar, an' is puttin' up for his raiment an' grub all reg'lar enough.

"'Which I yereafter backs this infant's play myse'f,' says Cherokee to the barkeep at the Oriental saloon which is the party the Stingin' Lizard pastures the young one on. 'So you're all right, Bill,' goes on this yere Cherokee to the barkeep, 'but now I goes back of the box for this infant boy I reckons I'll saw him off into a preacher or some sharp similar, whar he gets a Christian example. Whatever do you think?'

"The barkeep says himself he allows it's the play to make. So he an' Cherokee goes surgin' round an' at last they camps the boy—who's seven years comin' grass—on the only sky pilot in Tucson. This gospel spreader says he'll feed and bed down the boy for some sum, whioh was shore a giant one, but the figgers I now forgets.

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"Cherokee gives him a stack of blues to start his game, an' is now pesterin' 'round in a court tryin' to get the young one counter branded from the Stingin' Lizard's outfit into his, and giving the name of Cherokee Hall. That's what takes him over to Tucson them times, an' not stage robbin'.

"Two days later, in fact, to make shore all doubts is over, Cherokee even rings in said divine on us; which he tells the same story. I don't reckon now he's much of a preacher neither, for he gives Wolfville one whirl for luck over in the warehouse back of the New York store, an' I shore hears 'em as makes a mighty sight more noise, an' bangs a Bible twict as hard back in the States.

"I says so to Cherokee, but he puts it up he don't bank none on his preachin'.

"'What I aims at,' says Cherokee, 'is some one who rides herd on the boy all right, an' don't let him stampede off none into vicious ways.'

"'Why don't you keep the camp inform'd of this yere orphan an' the play you makes?' says Enright at the same time it's explained to the committee—the time they trees Cherokee about them stages.

"'It's that mushy,' says Cherokee, 'I'm some ashamed of the deal, an' don't allow to go postin' no notices thereof. But along comes this yere hold-up business an' all inadvertent tips my hand; which the same I stands, however, jest the same.'

"'It's all right,' says Enright, some disgusted though, 'but the next time you makes these foundling asylum trips, don't walk in the water so much. Leave your trail so Wolfville sees it, an' then folks ain't so likely to jump your camp in the dark an' take to shoutin' into you for Injuns an' similar hostiles.'"

A Plucky Young Woman.

MR. WILLIAM HOUNSLOW, otherwise Burglar Bill, followed his bundle of swag over the low window-sill on to the ground-floor verandah. Then he removed the somewhat warm and uncomfortable mask that coyly veiled his features from chance comers during active business hours, and indulged in a self-congratulatory stretch. The haul had been highly satisfactory, but the delicacy of his situation, and the enforced constraint of his attitude, had taxed all his muscles and nerves.

His indiscretion was momentary, but it sufficed. There was a hand on his arm, and a voice in his ear—a woman's voice, as he recognised, even as his hand went down to his revolver.

"Oh, my gracious! Do come and help me! It's a burglar, I know, and I am so frightened! Come, quick!"

"But I—I don't know you, miss!" stammered Bill, at a loss what else to say.

"Goodness, no! Nor I you; but you're not going to stand on ceremony, are you? Here's the side door, and I want you to go over every foot of the house with me; and don't wake the baby, if you can help it!"

"Trust me for that, miss," he replied gallantly, falling into the spirit of the adventure. "I'm a very quiet and light-footed fellow, and sometimes it seems as if the kids slept sounder than ever when I'm round"—as he thought of the chloroform in his kit.

"Oh, thank you! Would you mind going through the dining-room first, please? He's taken a lot; all the solid silver, I fancy—though how they can tell it from the plated, with nothing but a dark lantern, and being naturally in a hurry———"

"Just a minute, miss, if you please. I know ladies are scared of firearms, but this is a ticklish job, and I'd like my revolver handy."

"Oh, I hope you won't shoot anybody. Here's the library—you don't suppose he's under the couch?"

"Well, no, miss, I should say not. What with ladies looking under the bed regular before retiring, and it being cramped quarters anyhow—but you can look if you want to, miss."

"I'd rather you would."

He regarded her reproachfully. "An' have a feller light ker-whack on my back? No, miss; that's a risk I never take in my business. But you might shove this poker under, an' see what comes of it."

A number of energetic proddings, accompanied by suppressed "Shoos!" and "Scats!" brought no response.

"You're sure he isn't under it?"

"I'll take my oath on it, miss. Hullo, that door's shut!"

"Yes, I shut and bolted it myself, behind me. There, I've unbolted it; would you mind opening it, please?"

Very cautiously the gallant William walked up to the door, his cocked revolver covering the latch. "You can't be too careful, miss," he observed. "A cracksman—er—a burglar, miss, generally goes armed."

"The awful wretches! But there, they do take their lives in their hands, don't they? And you can't blame them for being cautious."

"Now don't you get sentimental, miss. Sentiment's always interfering with justice, as I know."

"How you must have suffered from it to speak so bitterly! You have had many trials, have you not?"

"Trials? Well, rather. But I've generally been acquit—ahem! Would you mind getting a little farther back—rather more to the left, miss?"

One hand is on the door knob, turning it with an almost imperceptible movement of the wrist; the other holds the revolver as in a vice, levelled full at the angle between the door and the jamb. The door opens half an inch or so to his slow and noiseless pressure. Suddenly a weight drags down his right arm. There is a quick push, accompanied by the swish of drapery, and the door swings wide. Strong arms pinion his own behind his back.

"It's no use, my man. Drop it; game's up."

This the young lady hears vaguely, as from a far distance, as she drops fainting under the patent burglar alarm that her fingers pressed ten minutes—or was it a year, or a century—ago?

Burglar Bill's sentence was for fifteen years. He gave the prison chaplain a full account of his latest misadventure in cracking a crib; and what he thought of his fair captor's proceedings is best told in his own words:

"I'm not denying that the girl had pluck; all the same, sir, I'm glad, for the credit of our sex, that it was a woman. Of course, a man couldn't ha' done it, but if he could, he wouldn't. He wouldn't ha' had the cheek, an' he'd 'a' been above taking in a feller that way. But women—a woman's up to any manners of games."

ARTHUR CHAMBERLAIN.

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The Story of a Lost Love

ONCE THERE was a beautiful woman married happily, and a mother. Her husband had a friend—a man of the world. This man discovered in his friend's wife an accumulation of all womanly graces; he saw in her the ideal woman, in all the world; the only one he could have loved and courted, fought for and died for. Yet she was wholly inaccessible, even in dreams. She was as good as she was beautiful, as true as she was winsome. Even had she not been so, his hands were tied by loyalty to his friend. Some of you will laugh at that. Well, if a man's honour fails him in one direction, I will not trust it in another; for a man is a whole remainder after abstracting all his evil from all his good. But "the flesh is weak." That is the villain's only plea for mercy.

The friend could not conceal it from the wife. *Could* not? I must be careful in my choice of words. Is there anything in the line of right that a man cannot do in such a case? The world is wide—he could have gone away; but she was so beautiful and winsome! Nor, as he had not declared himself, could she presume to send him away. He thought he saw in her eyes something of pity, something of warning, something of everything. The suffering wore him out.

But I must return to the beginning and resume my story.

I was much prostrated in mind and flesh, and the services of a skilful physician were eminently needed. With that idea I went to see a famous man, Dr. Brownell, a specialist in matters of the nerves. It may be thought a little peculiar that I went to consult this particular man, but it must be considered that besides being a very skilful physician, he was my friend. There might have been certain reasons why I should not consult him, but we need not discuss them now. His wife was a beautiful woman, and I knew her well; but what in the world has this to do with my visit to her husband?

Brownell was a peculiar man. Though he was the best friend I ever had, there was not a very close intimacy between us; and yet I was nearer to him than any other of his friends. He was much older than his wife. A kind heart, given force and direction by great wealth, had been exercised by him in my behalf with so intelligent a purpose that I became a man of some little importance in the community.

The physician lived in a fine old house of great size; not all of it was occupied. He was a tireless collector of curiosities, and had expended a fortune in that pursuit. Few of these were ever shown to his friends, and he never spoke of them, but kept them in out-of-the-way places in the great establishment. He was a reticent man, and many feared him, but I saw nothing in him but goodness and a marvellous skill.

So it was upon Dr. Brownell that I called formally as a patient. His office was on the main floor of the house, and consisted of two rooms—a handsomely fitted reception room, and at the back of it one in which his patients consulted him. Each was very large. Although I had called and visited very often at his house, I had never been in his office before.

When I entered he was just ready to go out, but he welcomed me with his old-time cordiality.

"Why, I am glad to see you," he said, taking my hand; "this is the first time you have honoured my house with a call. Come in and rest awhile. You surely haven't come to see me professionally?" He looked closely at me as he asked the question.

"Yes," I replied. "I fear I am in rather a bad way."

His face showed much concern.

"You do look a little shaken," said he, removing one

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of his gloves. Then he began in a deliberate fashion to make a scientific inquiry into my case. While he was occupied thus a messenger, all out of breath, arrived to call him to a case of urgency. Dr. Brownell, seeing the need to hurry, asked me if I could come as well on the following day. Of course, I released him. He hurried away saying:

"I am very sorry to leave you, but it can't be helped. Step into the house and see Mrs. Brownell. I am sure she will be glad to see you. Go through that door, it is the nearest way. You will find the hall a little dark, but go straight ahead and you will be all right."

Then he hurried away, and in a moment I was alone.

I went to the door which I understood him to have pointed out. It was the consulting room. I discovered that there were two doors together. Selecting the left-hand one, I turned the knob and pulled the door open. The hall beyond appeared to be quite dark, but I remembered what he had said about that, and I felt safe.

I stepped into the hall, and instantly the door, which was a heavy affair made of oak, closed upon me, pushing me out of its way into the hall. Then I discovered that I was in absolute darkness, although there was a bright day without.

Nevertheless, recalling Brownell's instructions, I went ahead with much confidence. Suddenly, to my infinite amazement, the ground seemed to open, and I plunged headlong downwards into a suffocating darkness, at every instant striking cruelly upon hidden obstacles along the way.

At last, after having taken what seemed to be a great flight, I came heavily to a stone floor, where the darkness was intense.

Fright was my first sensation, and indignation my next; for was it not likely that Brownell had played some ugly trick upon me? I sat perfectly still for a little while, doing much wondering.

A little reason found exercise in my disordered faculties. I reflected that the abyss into which I had fallen was an unguarded flight of stairs, into which I had walked in the darkness. A cautious hand-survey verified the belief, for there I lay at the bottom of the stairs.

A moment later I remembered that I had noticed two doors, one beside the other. It was very clear that I had made a mistake by choosing a door leading to the cellar. It was then no serious matter at all, and I laughed at myself for my terror.

All that was necessary was to ascend the flight, open the door, and emerge by the other. Without any waste of time I went about putting this plan into use; but when I had clambered up the stairs and found the door, I discovered that I was securely locked within this dismal place! There was no knob on the outside at all.

My first intention was to get relief by knocking on the door; but there quickly arose two reasons why I should not—no one was within, and besides, even if I should summon attention, how could I explain my ridiculous plight? My clothing had been torn by my fall, and I knew by the token of a warm, sticky sensation about my face and neck that I had been hurt, and was bleeding freely!

Accordingly I descended the stairs, and by keeping my hand on one of the walls began to creep forward, with a careful guard upon the possibility of another flight of stairs. Presently I found a turn in the passage, and followed it on. I came to a transverse passage, and was in doubt which way to turn. Meanwhile the darkness did not relax in the smallest way, and absolute silence reigned on every side.

I turned to the right, and in that direction, not far away, I saw an exceedingly thin line of light, which I surmised issued from the bottom of a door. I went towards this, and was about to put my hand upon the door, when it occurred to me that caution sometimes was a valuable exercise. Thereupon I knelt and examined the line of light more closely; and it was somewhat disheartening to discover that instead of being white it was yellow. In other words, it was gaslight and not daylight that shone beyond the door. While thus I knelt I thought I heard a certain scurring within. It was a sound not very unlike that which I had mistaken for automatic aberration of my hearing sense. Now the same sound gave me a certain depressing feeling of insecurity, as though a malign mystery, suited to this uncanny place, was preparing a grotesque, and perhaps dangerous, reception for me.

Should I abandon this enterprise and seek another door? There was danger that I might not find this one again. Indeed, was there anything to fear? Surely, my conscience—I gently pushed against the door.

It did not open. I found a keyhole and peeped through it! A curious large hall seemed to be beyond, lighted faintly, and I thought I saw the shadowy form of a woman float across the field of vision.

Just above the keyhole I found a knob. I turned it, and instantly the door flew open, pulling me violently with it; and before the instinctive movement to seize upon a support and hold it securely permitted me to take my grasp of the knob, I found myself wholly at the mercy of unresisted gravitation, flying undoubtedly downwards.

Upon looking about I found myself in the strangest place it was ever my fortune to see; but before I describe it I must say something in explanation of my unaccountable flight through the air.

The floor of this hall was sunk a few feet below the level of the passage by which I had approached, and down from the door led a flight of stone steps, which the pulling of the door had made me to clear as I fell.

I had thought that someone was concealed behind the door, and pulled it open quickly when I turned the knob; but upon looking I saw no one, and I must believe that for some reason, which I shall not attempt to explain, the conduct of the door was guided by a powerful spring.

There was no time for any intelligent kind of thinking, for, besides being in a large hall of extraordinary appearance, I found myself in the company of the most astonishing people. The walls were covered with curious things from every corner of the world. The roof was perforated with openings, representing stars, animals, angels, demons, and other things. These openings were covered with coloured glass of every shade, and above all was the light which shone through the grotesque openings, and filled the room with a soft, yellow radiance.

The light was too faint for a fine definition of feature, and so I could not then have said that I knew any of the persons present. They were all on the opposite side of the room, and every one of them was looking at me. Some were sitting, others standing, and all were upon an elevated platform which ran round the room. This platform was raised not more than eight inches above the floor.

I scrambled to my feet and looked round upon them, of course expecting that I should be spoken to. But not a word was said and not a movement was made. The whole circumstance was so extraordinary, and the silence

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and immovability of the assembled people so impressive, that a strange tingling feeling of which all who have been frightened know the nature, crept up my face and into my hair, and my heart beat with what seemed to be so strong a torsional force that it twisted a sharp pain out of its functions. I made an essay of speech.

"This," I said, indignation arising with the advent of courage, "may be a very amusing pastime for you, but I think it that you are putting a very gross indignity upon me. If Dr. Brownell is in this distinguished company I would like him to hear me say that I resent being made the victim of this boyish prank for the edification of spectators invited to enjoy my discomfiture, and I propose, without any loss of time, to give to my resentment such form and character as will cause it to have a disagreeable permanency in his recollection."

The wide-winged and rather silly threat might as well have been spoken to the red dragons and green angels in the ceiling, for not a word or movement did it elicit. I found it easy to speak, but my voice sounded as though it had come from someone else to me alone, and that made me uncertain that I had spoken at all.

But a quickening anger was straining its leash within me, and I made no effort to control it. A sense of outrage, shame, and indignation swept over me; these were things I could not bear.

At this moment Brownell's individuality emerged from the dim shadows of the company, and I walked straight up to him.

He looked at me steadily as I approached—the old, good-natured, half-quizzical expression that I knew so well sitting upon his face. I had approached very near him, when an indefinable violent sensation seized upon me and held me from further advance. Probably it was as much dread as terror; but whatever it was, there I stood rooted to the floor, staring in dismay at this silent and motionless man with the quizzical expression.

I went without further thinking to the portière.

Quite near me was an old man sitting in a chair, his hand resting on a heavy stick. I seized the stick and tried to wrench it from his grasp, intending to brain Brownell with it; but imagine what must have been my horror to see the old man's arm come away from his body with the stick, the hand still retaining its hold! I threw the stick away with a shudder, and went up closer to Brownell.

I caught him by the shoulders, and shook him with such violence that his head rolled off on the floor by my feet. Then the truth burst the envelope of my vast and inconceivable stupidity—not all stupidity, for another affliction beset me—these were all wax figures! I had stumbled into one of those queer nooks in Brownell's house where some of his treasures were stored, and where, in these uncanny ways, he enjoyed himself alone.

The reaction from this discovery was peculiar. At first I laughed, but my laughter became so loud and furious that I saw it was hysteria, and then I had trouble to check it. My head was splitting, and my throat was cracked and burning. Pains of various kinds found employment in torturing me, and they were pains to which I was in no wise accustomed.

Therefore it was necessary that I should make haste to escape from this almost unearthly place. The silence and apparent intelligent immobillity of the wax figures were more than depressing. I began to fear, indeed, that after all they would take on life and present some new form of suffering for my torture.

At the end of the hall was a wide door with a *portière*. From where I stood I could see the white satin of a woman's skirt just behind the *portière* on one side.

Evidently no light entered the room except the weak, diffused light of the demons and angels in the room where I was standing, and hence it was much darker beyond the *portière*; but after looking round I saw that if there was any escape, except by the way I had come, it must be through the room in which stood the woman in satin.

Yet I feared to enter that room. The dim light, the woman behind the *portière*—it all looked mysterious and dread-lurking. It was evident that the woman did not stand as did the others, on a platform; but was that sufficient upon which to construct a belief that she was not of wax? and would it not be all the better if she were flesh and blood? Assuredly, for that meant deliverance. I went without further thinking to the *portière* and passed within the room, having an unaccountable care that I did not pass too near the woman in satin. I went into the room and looked round for a door. None could I find.

My gaze fell upon the woman whose skirt I had seen, and then came upon me the very heaviest blow of all in that day of miseries, for there before me, beautiful and radiant, embodiment of all the finest graces of woman kind, unspeakably winsome, and in every possible way the loveliest woman under the sun, stood the physician's wife.

If only it had been she, indeed, instead of an artful wax counterfeit! I stood and admired her to my heart's content, and then I looked another way, and continued my search for the door.

In which ever way I turned I felt that the soft blue eyes of this enchanting figure were upon me. This gave me a certain fear, which, beyond a consciousness of extreme irritation, I was not able to understand. My disorder began to take on an exhilaration much like that which comes from hashish, imparting a quickening power to my senses, and a keen edge to my imagination. A feeling of happy confidence and lively enthusiasm struck off the angles of the fear which formerly had depressed me, and I became bold, valiant, and adventurous.

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What an inspiring effect even the wax image of a beautiful woman may have on a man! I again looked at the figure in satin. Could I have been in error? Was it possible that a wax figure could be caught stealing a quick glance at me, and suppressing a delicious smile?

A great hope, so wild that I dare not give it too generous entertainment, leapt up from my heart. Fool or madman—which was I? Though the whole world might be consumed with love of her, she would remain steadfast in the way of a wife for ever. It was wholly impossible that she should choose this astounding way of letting me know that the one secret of my life had slipped away from me, and had been welcomed into her own life.

I gazed upon her, filled with awe—her head slowly turned, her glorious eyes rested full upon my face, and the sweetest smile that I had ever seen on her beautiful face saturated all my sensibilities with inconceivable delights. There was a meaning in that look and smile that I had never seen before, and the light that shone through it was a welcome to me!

I went closer to her, my feet winged with joy. The smile beckoned, the glance was a reassurance!

"Alice!" I cried.

"I have waited for you long," she answered; and there can be no music on earth so sweet as those words.

I caught her in my arms and drew her to my breast, nearly crushing her. I looked up into her face, and she looked down into mine. All at once a look of horror came into her face.

"You are bloody!" she cried.

"It is nothing," I protested.

The look of horror became one of terror.

"Oh," she said, "there is blood on your face and villainy in your heart! So this is how you would betray your best friend, and wreck my life? I will save him and you."

With that I saw something bright and keen glitter a moment in her hand, and, in an instant, a thing cold and sharp slipped behind the ribs of my breast. I choked; a blindness assailed me, and I felt myself falling all at once to the floor.

* * * * * * *

Dr. Brownell was sitting beside me in a room of his house, and I was lying in bed with a feeling of great weakness. He arose and stood over me, and his face showed much relief.

"You are all right now, aren't you, old fellow?"

How kind his voice was!

"Yes."

I felt no pain in my breast, but feebly I put up my hand.

"Is the wound dangerous?" I asked.

"What wound?"

I made no reply.

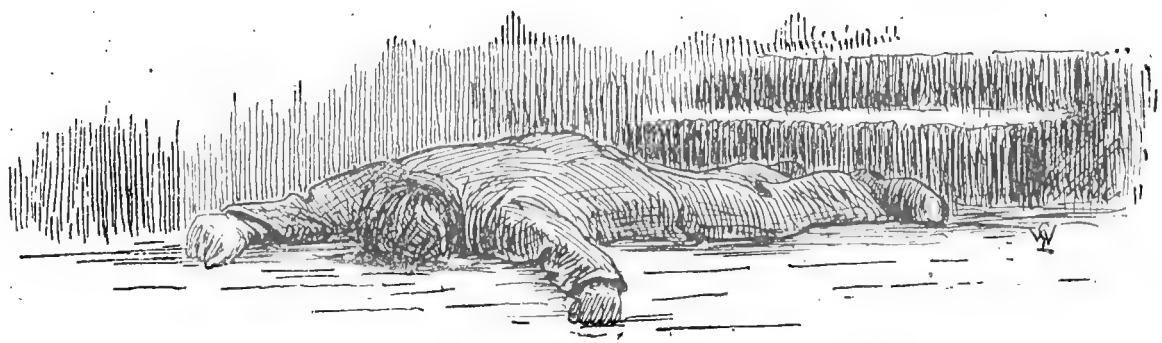
"The only wound you had was a slight abrasion of the scalp, and that has been cured a week."

In every possible way the loveliest woman under the sun.

I dare not ask any more questions.

"Alice came in to see you this morning, and left these flowers for you. I told her I thought you would be all right to-day, and she will come to see you as soon as I send her word. By the way, old man, that was a curious mistake you made in getting among my wax figures. We found you unconscious. In your delirium you must have developed a strong dislike for the figures of Alice and me, as you completely demolished them."

Annie Davis.



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ON CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

A LITTLE over three years ago I had some business to do for my firm in Edinburgh, and took the 8.30 p.m. express from King's Cross. I had selected a comfortable first-class smoking compartment, and was congratulating myself that I should have it to myself, at any rate until the train reached Grantham, which was the first stop, when just as the guard was blowing his whistle, the door of the carriage opened and a man got in and ensconced himself in the corner on the opposite side of the carriage to the seat which I had taken.

By the time the train had cleared the outskirts of London I had got over the unreasonable sort of displeasure that the average British traveller usually experiences under such circumstances, and was chatting amicably with the stranger, who was a good-looking young fellow of about my own age, well-informed, and with pleasant, engaging manners, which were, however, somewhat discounted by a somewhat curious look about the eyes, and certain signs of dissipation which could not easily escape the eye of one as accustomed to business dealings with all sorts of people as I was.

From commonplace subjects our conversation gradually veered round to a burglary which had taken place a few weeks previously, and in which the still undiscovered criminals had escaped by shooting the only policeman on the scene before he had time to raise any alarm.

This, in its turn, brought the conversation to firearms, and I happened to let out the fact that I once had a narrow escape of my life when travelling in charge of some valuable property, and that ever since then I had carried a revolver while on my travels. This appeared to rouse the curiosity of my fellow-traveller, and he asked me whether I had my revolver with me then. Thinking no evil I said: "Yes, here it is," and put my hand to the pistol-pocket that I always had made in my trousers in the American style, and foolishly pulled it out.

As I did so, he held out his hand and said:

"Ah, that's a pretty-looking weapon—very pretty. Would you mind letting me have a look at it?"

It was a very foolish thing to do, but I suppose most men would have done the same thing under similar circumstances, and I handed it to him with the remark:

"Yes, it's a very handy little tool in an emergency, but handle it gently because it is loaded, and those things have a nasty way of going off when you don't mean them to do so."

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "I'm accustomed to handle these things. We carry them much more frequently in South Africa than you do in England."

"Oh!" I said. "Do you come from South Africa?"

"Yes," he replied. "I am in business in Cape Town—at least, I represent an English firm there."

"Indeed!" I said. "Do you happen to know a man named Roger Stanton out there?"

"Yes, I do, very well," he answered, looking up at me with a curious blink in his eyes. "Why do you ask?"

"Because the firm I'm connected with has a representative out there, and that is his name."

"Oh, indeed. And may I ask whether this is your name on the pistol?" he said, putting his finger on a little silver plate on the butt of the revolver.

"Yes," I answered, "that's my name. Frank Austen, at your service. But, come, I think you had better give me the pistol back. You might drop it, handling it like that."

While we had been talking, he had been turning the weapon over and over in his fingers in a nervous sort of way that made me speak as I did. For a few moments he kept his head bent over the pistol, still turning it round and round in his fingers, and when he looked up again his face was white to the lips and so distorted with suppressed passion that I positively hardly recognised it.

For an instant he seemed to be trying to shape words that his lips refused to utter, and then he forced himself to speak, and the words came out in a thick, guttural sort of voice, that was totally unlike that in which he had so far spoken.

"So ho! you are Frank Austen, are you? The young gentleman with the brilliant prospects, travelling manager to Macdonald's, and the successful lover of Maggie Macdonald; probable partner, and that sort of thing, eh? Well, Frank Austen, my name is Roger Stanton, and I am the man whose failure means your success; whose life your good luck has ruined; the man who loves Maggie Macdonald a thousand times more than your cold-blooded respectable nature could ever love anybody."

"Give me back that pistol," I said sharply, making a grab at it as I spoke. "If I'd known who you were——"

"You'd never have given it to me, would you? No, I don't suppose you would; but as it is you have done so, and, what's more, I'm going to use it."

While he was thus speaking, with a quick sinuous movement of his body he had wriggled out of the seat in front of me, and got to the other end of the compartment, pointing the barrel of the pistol towards me and keeping his hand on the trigger.

It was a self-cocking revolver, and I knew that he had but to pull his finger back to put a bullet through me. To get the pistol from him as matters stood was an impossibility. He had the drop on me, as they say in America, and for the time being I was at his mercy,

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consequently I threw myself back in my seat and said as steadily as I could:

"And so I suppose you mean to murder me with my own pistol, just because I have been successful where you have failed, and because a girl loves me who never could have loved you? Well, if you are mad enough to do it, do it. The end will be the same. We are alone in the carriage, the guard saw you get in here with me, and you can't get out till the train stops at Grantham."

While I was saying this I had taken hold of the window-strap and pulled it off the button, then I dropped the window suddenly, jumped up in my seat, and put my hand out to catch hold of the cord, intending to pull it and call the attention of the guard. He watched me, still keeping the barrel of the pistol pointed towards me, and said, with a fiendish leer on his white face:

"Pull away my friend. You're on the wrong side. The cord's on this side. Now sit down again and listen to me."

I groped about for the cord and found none. Then I threw myself back into my seat prepared to face the worst, and said:

"Go on. What have you got to say?"

"Not much," he said, now speaking passionately, and rushing his words out breathlessly. "I'm not going to shoot you, don't be afraid. Right or wrong I hate you a good deal too much for that.

"My own life is worthless to me. You have chiefly made it so, and bad luck has done the rest. This is your pistol, and, as you say, the train doesn't stop till it gets to Grantham, so it's you that will be found in the carriage alone with a corpse with a bullet out of your pistol in its head. See? Now marry Maggie Macdonald if you can."

I sprang out of my seat and rushed at him, but before I reached him he had put the pistol to his temple. There was a flash and a sharp crack.

At the same moment the train suddenly slackened speed, and the jerk flung his body forward and threw it at my feet, the blood from the wound, which had divided the temporal artery, spurting out over the lower part of one leg of my trousers.

I staggered back horror-stricken to my seat, staring blankly at the body which lay motionless on the floor. In that one terrible moment I saw nothing and thought of nothing but the tragedy of which I was the sole witness. But a few minutes later I remembered that at the moment that the train slackened speed another one passed it, and by the lights I knew it must be a passenger train.

For what may have been half an hour or more, the train, which had immediately quickened up again, sped onwards through the darkness, and gradually the power of thinking returned to me. My first impulse was to pull the cord, call the attention of the guard, and tell him the whole story exactly as it had happened, trusting to my own unblemished character and the peculiar relationship in which the dead man stood to me to clear me of suspicion.

If I had done so all might have been well, and I might have been spared, myself and those who were dear to me, a period of terrible suffering. But I did not do so; for I remembered the other train passing, and the horrible thought flashed upon me that it was quite possible that someone might have been looking out of the window of it, and seen me standing for that fatal instant with the corpse at my feet. They would have had no time to take in details, and what they had seen would be enough to destroy all belief in any story that I might tell.

With this thought came panic—that blind, unreasoning panic which seizes alike the innocent and the guilty at times, and leads to the commission of errors fatal and irrevocable. I had but one idea in my mind, and that was a wild, irresistible longing to escape from the carriage before the train reached Grantham, which it would do now in about forty minutes.

I looked down at my trousers and saw the blood on them. I had another pair in my portmanteau in the carriage with me. I pulled the blinds down, and in five minutes I had put on the other pair, and stuffed the blood-stained ones into my portmanteau, and rapidly locked it again.

By the time I had made the change the train slackened speed again approaching Peterborough. I knew we were not timed to stop there, but it is often necessary for the trains to run slowly from the station, and this was my chance if ever I had one.

I looked out of the window, saw the lights of the town and station nearly a mile ahead, dropped my portmanteau out on to the line and followed it as quickly as I could. I got off with a pretty severe shaking, but no serious damage, and started back down the line to find my portmanteau as soon as the train had passed on. It happened to be a very dark night, and I was not detected leaving the train.

I watched it run through Peterborough station without stopping. Then I left the line, crossed some fields, got into the town, and made my way to the station. As it happened, there was a fast train back to London in ten minutes, which I caught, and so returned to town. My plan was to get back to King's Cross, wait until the midnight train, and then go on again to Edinburgh by that, and this I carried through successfully.

I arrived in Edinburgh congratulating myself on having successfully put pursuit off the scent, but this dream was speedily dispelled, for on getting out on to the platform, the first thing that met my eye was the contents bill of *The Scotsman* with a bold line across the top:

MURDER ON THE LINE!

Underneath this was another line of smaller print, which I could not read from where I stood. I went up closer, and to my horror read: "The murderer's pistol found in the carriage."

Then, for the first time since the tragedy, I remembered that I had made the fatal omission of forgetting to pick up the pistol with which Stanton had shot himself. At the moment I thought I should have fallen prone on the platform as the truth burst in upon my mind in all its horrible distinctness.

My name was on the pistol; it was lying on the floor beside the corpse when it was found; it was known that I had left London by that train; it would be useless for me now to say, as I had intended to, that I had been detained in London, and had come on by the midnight train, and it was too late now to tell the story of the suicide, for had I not practically proclaimed my own guilt by the course of action that I had taken?

I hurried off the platform, thinking everyone's eyes were fixed upon me, and recognising me as the murderer. Outside the station I bought a copy of *The Scotsman*, and then, for the first time, I noticed another item of news. This was headed: "Alarming accident to the London Express," and told how the up-train, a few miles south of Peterborough, had collided with some trucks that had run back off a siding, and how the

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driver and stoker had been flung out of the engine, and stunned by the shock, though the train itself had escaped unhurt.

As I read the paragraph I saw at a glance that that must have been the train which passed the one in which I was coming north at the moment that Stanton shot himself, and I thought how paltry now seemed the chance that I had before feared so much of someone having seen me from the window. How willing I would have been to have taken that chance now in exchange for the certainty of apparent guilt conveyed by the finding of my pistol!

It would be of no use to tell here in detail how for nearly a fortnight I managed to elude pursuit by altering my personal appearance and constantly moving about from one place to another, until at length I got back to London, and was there finally run to earth in the obscure Camden Town lodging in which I had sought a hiding-place.

Suffice is to say that I was captured, and in due course tried for the wilful murder of Roger Stanton by shooting him through the head with my own pistol, which was produced in Court, and was easily shown to have fired the bullet extracted from the dead man's skull.

Of course I told my own story, but it was so improbable on the face of it, that my solicitor almost laughed at me as I told it; and at the trial my counsel advanced it in a fashion that did me a great deal more harm than good. The result was what I expected. I was found guilty and sentenced to death.

Looking at the facts as they were presented to the Court, it was almost impossible that there could have been any doubt in the minds of either judge or jury. The suicide theory was torn to shreds by the prosecuting counsel when he produced a fully-loaded revolver which had been found in the pocket of the dead man.

"Surely," he said in his address to the jury, "if Stanton had wanted to commit suicide here was the means to his hand without borrowing another weapon." Far more irresistible was the conclusion that we had had high words, presumably about our love rivalry, that he might possibly have threatened me, and that I had shot him down before he could get his pistol out of his pocket.

There were only two people in the world that believed my story, at least, so far as I knew, and these were Maggie Macdonald and her father, with whom I had some half-dozen interviews in the vain hope of discovering some means of escape from my frightful position.

It would be impossible for me to describe those interviews, or how, as the fatal day drew nearer, the agony of them deepened into despair, till at last on the day but one before that fixed for my execution I bade farewell to the only two friends I had in the world, and prepared to appear before the bar of a more far-sighted justice than that of earth.

Early in the afternoon of the day before the fatal morning I was surprised by a visit from the governor of the goal. He came to tell me that in consequence of fresh evidence that had come to light the day before, and had been laid before the Home Secretary, my sentence had been respited for seven days, pending further inquiries.

He then went on to tell me that the day before he had received a visit from the chief house-surgeon of Peterborough Hospital, in which were still lying the driver and stoker of the train that had met with an accident shortly after passing the one in which the tragedy had appened.

These two men, in consequence of the injuries they had received in the collision, had been either unconscious or delirious ever since; but for the last few days the stoker had got more coherent in his delirium, and had been constantly describing over and over again a scene exactly like that which I had described in my account of Stanton's suicide.

Careful inquiries had proved that the story I had given had tallied in every detail with the stoker's ravings, even to the fact of my having put my head out of the window to catch the cord, the moment before Stanton threatened to shoot himself.

So impressed was he with the conviction that the injured man had something on his mind of a very serious nature, and seeing also the close parallel between what he had heard from him and read as my story in the papers, he had communicated with my solicitor, and, without telling me or the Macdonalds, for fear of raising false hopes, they had gone to the Home Secretary; and he had granted a respite until the stoker should have sufficiently recovered his reason to make a formal deposition.

Before the period of the respite had elapsed, both the driver and the stoker were convalescent, and as soon as they were well enough to be examined by a magistrate, they both made independent statements, which set forth their version of what they had seen.

On approaching the train in which I was, they had seen, by the glare of the headlight of their own engine, a man thrust his head and shoulder out of one of the carriages and grope about for the cord. The arm outside had attracted their notice, and they both looked hard into the carriage as they passed.

Both the trains had slackened speed. As the engine came level with the compartment, they saw the one who had been reaching for the cord make for the man in the opposite corner with wide-open outstretched hands, as if to seize him. Both were quite sure that neither of these hands held a weapon.

In the opposite corner they saw a man half rise from his seat at the same instant, and put a pistol to his temple. Then the two trains passed each other, both quickening their pace, and a few minutes after came the collision which had closed the mouths of these, the only two witnesses of the tragedy, for more than a month.

The next day I was taken, in the charge of two warders, to the hospital, and identified as the man who had put his arm out of the carriage to seize the cord, and whom they had afterwards seen making for the other man with the pistol, as though to deprive him of it.

As both the men were absolutely agreed that I was not the one who had the pistol, and who was the one who tried to call the attention of the guard, and as, indeed, their depositions bore out my own extremely improbable story to the very letter, my unconditional release was ordered the same night, and so from the very shadow of the scaffold I was restored to the sunshine of life and love.

We talk of that evil time as little as possible, but more than once both my wife and myself have caught ourselves thinking with a shudder of the consequences that must inevitably have fallen on us if the stoker's delirium had taken another turn, or if the surgeon of the hospital had looked upon it merely as the baseless raving of a diseased mind.

Jerome Parkes.

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THE QUEEN of NIGHT

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By HEADON HILL,
(Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.)

CHAPTER XX.

Mrs. Brinkworth's Narrative.

At the request of my friend, Captain Cyril Forrester, late of the Merchant Service, I take up my pen to fill a gap in the statement which he is preparing for press about that awful voyage in the *Queen of Night*. Certain things, very relative to the end now so fast approaching, occurred during his absence from the ship, and also while he was so wickedly confined after his rescue from the spar; and it is of these matters, of which he was necessarily not an eye-witness, that he has asked me to write.

When the ship left Genoa none of the passengers knew that Captain Forrester had been left behind, and that Mr. McIntyre had superseded him in the command by cabled instructions from the owners at home. Still less were they made aware of the supposed reason. It was only when we were well out to sea, and there was no fear of anyone on board going ashore to the Captain's assistance, that Doctor Zavertal allowed the facts to leak out; and in such a hurry was he to get away that, at his instigation, Mr. McIntyre would not wait a quarter of an hour for the passenger then known as General Waldo, who had gone ashore secretly the previous day and had not returned.

Zavertal took care to lie circumstantially, so that the story he told could be corroborated. He informed the group of passengers selected for the purpose that he had discovered early in the voyage that "poor Forrester" suffered from delusions, though he had hoped that they would not interfere with his proper working of the ship.

The malady, however, had developed so quickly that when the Captain turned a gentleman out of the ship on the absurd ground that he was a stowaway who had been landed at Barcelona—also by a strange and sudden freak of his own—there was only one course to pursue. His, Zavertal's, responsibility as medical officer made it imperative that he should consult the British Consul, the result being that the unfortunate Captain was being taken care of till arrangements could be made for his return to England.

The news of Captain Forrester's detention soon spread through the ship, but luckily I was able to forestall rumour, and break it to my dear young charge, Miss Challenor, myself. Aline had confided their engagement to me, and, if for no other reason, they had earned my sympathy and gratitude by their unceasing kindness towards me during my terrible ordeal at Gibraltar.

Luckily I was able to forestall rumour.

To my great relief Aline looked upon the Doctor's allegation as so utterly ridiculous that she did not take it to heart so much as I had feared, her chief feeling being one of indignation that her lover should be temporarily subjected to such treatment at the instance of a man she already disliked. In her ignorance of ulterior motives, she was confident that an hour or two would suffice for Captain Forrester to convince the authorities of the mistake that had been made, and she quite expected that he would appear at Naples to put Zavertal to confusion.

This hope was destined to be quickly shattered. At breakfast the next morning, Mr. McIntyre announced that owing to the prevalence of cholera at Naples, the *Queen of Night* would have to abandon her visit to that port, but would touch at Leghorn instead. The reason given—we know now that none such existed—was quite strong enough to stop any general grumbling at the change, but to Aline it was a terrible blow. From Leghorn the ship would go to Alexandria, possibly calling at Cagliari in Sardinia *en route*, we were told, but in any case offering no opportunity for Captain Forrester to rejoin her.

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It must not be supposed that the passengers allowed Captain Forrester's deposition to pass without a good deal of sympathetic comment. He had become a great favourite

This hope was destined to be quickly shattered.

with all, and Doctor Zavertal required all his own established popularity to justify the course he had taken. But he was equal to the occasion, and by hints and innuendos managed to hold his own. An especially strong point with him was that Captain Forrester had prevented him from going ashore at Barcelona, when he wished to procure a certain drug to cure old Lady Carberry's neuralgia. This carried weight with the tuft-hunters, of whom there were not a few on the pleasure-cruiser.

At Leghorn two incidents worthy of note occurred. We arrived off the port shortly after breakfast, and many of the passengers were preparing to land when the Doctor came into the saloon and announced that before any shore parties left the ship it had been decided that he should go and see if the town had a clean bill of health, as if it were infected we might be subjected to the annoyance of quarantine at other Mediterranean ports.

He came back in a couple of hours' time with the news that several cases of cholera had occurred, and advised that, though it might not be dangerous to land, it would be wiser in view of possible future restrictions to give the place a wide berth. It has since been proved that cholera had not been heard of at Leghorn that year.

The second item calling for remark was the return of "General Waldo"—the passenger who had been left behind at Genoa. A few minutes after Zavertal came aboard I was on deck, trying to comfort Aline, who was terribly downcast at the prospect of leaving Italy without further news of her lover. The anchor was being got up, and all was ready for the start, when I heard someone say: "Why, here comes old Waldo; he has caught us up after all."

Looking up, I saw a shore boat rapidly approaching the ship, and sure enough the fare was the eccentric American tourist, whose loss everyone had been regretting. The fact of his reappearance soon spread, and the steamer's side was quickly thronged with passengers, eager to welcome him back. Zavertal was standing by when he came up the ladder, and greeted him warmly, though with some surprise.

"Why, General, this is delightful," he said in his most genial manner. "We had quite given you up for good. What on earth have you been up to, and how came you to be smart enough to pick us up?"

"Easy as falling off a log," was the characteristically quaint reply. "I got fooling round among the stores at Genoa, missed you by ten minutes, and came on by the cars, after learning your change of destination from your agent, who was still on the quay when I came up."

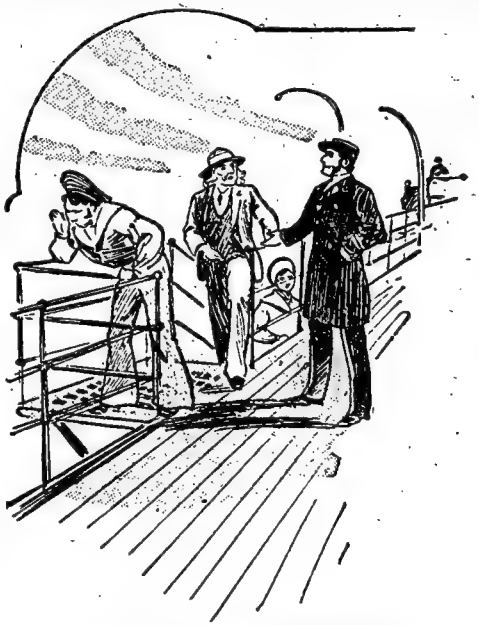
"Well, we're all glad to see you," said the Doctor. "By the way, there is a bit of news which I fear will distress you. We have been obliged to leave poor Captain Forrester behind—a little wrong here, you know"—tapping his forehead.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Waldo. "That is bad hearing certainly; but, come to think of it, I guess I'm not altogether astonished. The skipper's talk has been powerful wild of late."

Zavertal must have been pleased indeed to find that one who had been so specially friendly with Captain Forrester was yet willing to confirm and approve his action. Taking Waldo by the arm, he walked him off for a confidential talk, and during the next day or two I noticed that he was almost obsequiously attentive to the strange American. Fortunately Aline was too preoccupied either to care about Waldo's return or to heed his conversation; but what I heard filled me with an intense disgust, which I showed later in the day by treating him with marked coolness, Zavertal being present at the time. Thence onward, so long as I knew him as "General Waldo," our relations were decidedly "strained."

On leaving Leghorn the passengers were informed that it had been decided to visit Cagliari, but first to skirt the Italian coast as far as Civita Vecchia, so that as far as possible the original programme, less the call at Naples, might be preserved.

On the evening of the day after we left Leghorn, while Aline was resting in the state-room, I was sitting alone on



"Why, General, this is delightful."

deck when General Waldo passed me. Up to the last day or two we should have interchanged bows and smiles, and very likely he would have made some quaint remark; but now he looked straight to his front, and I pretended to

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admire the sunset. He walked aft to the stern, and disappeared behind the wheel-house.

A minute or so after he had gone by I chanced to look down at my lap, and to my surprise saw there a crumpled slip of paper which had certainly not long been there. Opening it out, I was astonished to read:

"Follow me to wheel-house. A few words of vital importance to Miss Challenor."

The American had tossed the missive there so adroitly that the motion had escaped me. For a moment I was in doubt as to what I ought to do. His callousness about Captain Forrester's trouble hardly tallied with a desire to serve Aline, for every one on the ship had by this time guessed how matters were between them, nor could I see how it was in his power to be of use. But reflecting that to hear what he had to say would in no way bind me to accept his services, and perhaps impelled by feminine curiosity, I rose and walked aft.

The manner of his communicating with me implied a wish for secrecy, and I therefore took care to be unobserved when I slipped behind the wheel-house. Waldo was leaning over the stern-rail, watching the foaming track of the screw, but directly I rounded the corner he was at my side, with a quick, gliding motion that was quite novel to the supposed aged veteran. As soon as he opened his mouth to speak, I knew that he had been either acting a part before or was doing so now, for the firm grave tones that fell upon my ears were those of a man in the prime of life.

"You have done well to come," he said. "And first of all, let me correct a wrong impression. Captain Forrester has no stauncher friend than myself on this ship. I spoke as I did the other day in your hearing for several reasons, the chief of them being that I wished to incur your temporary enmity."

He came close to me.

"I was grieved beyond measure to hear you speak so hardly and untruthfully of one who had been your intimate," I replied. "You could not have chosen a better way to effect your purpose, though I do not understand why you should have wished to make me think badly of you."

He came close to me and said impressively, though scarcely above a whisper: "Because it is a matter of life or death to your fair young charge that Doctor Zavertal should believe us to be at daggers drawn, Mrs. Brinkworth. You and I have to stand between that poor girl and a horrible end, and a secret alliance, while we ostensibly remain hostile, will help us to combat—successfully, I believe—a treacherous and insidious foe."

And then rapidly, but very clearly and concisely, he told me much that the reader has already learned from Captain Forrester's narrative—his knowledge of Zavertal's past career, his suspicions of intended foul play, and the development of doubt into certainty through what he had heard and seen at Genoa. He concluded the shocking story by describing the interrupted attempt on the Captain's life at Pisa, and told how he himself shadowed Vizard to Leghorn—to lose him there, however, shortly after he had resumed his original character of "Waldo." He had no doubt that Vizard, after conferring with Zavertal, had gone south after Captain Forrester; but loth as he was to leave the Captain unprotected, he, Mr. Kennard, had thought his own services most needed on the ship, and had consequently come aboard.

"You must not be frightened," he added, seeing that I trembled violently. "Forewarned is forearmed, and if you will only lend me your assistance I think that we shall be able to beat the gang with their own weapons. You see my object is to get absolute proof on the capital charge, and so scotch them once for all. If I were to denounce them on mere suspicion I might spoil this particular scheme of their villainy, but it is very doubtful as things are if I could get a conviction, and they would be certain to commence operations again in some new form."

"Tell me how I can help," I replied; "if there is anything that a woman can do I will do it for Aline's sake—even at the risk of my life."

"At present I foresee no personal risk to you, but in dealing with such criminals—soon, I trust, to become desperate—it is necessary to be prepared," he answered gravely. "Briefly, I want you to aid me in furnishing Zavertal with the opportunity he desires of prescribing for Miss Challenor. She must either be induced to feign illness, of course, after having been told the reason; or we must give her something to bring on symptoms without doing her the slightest harm. You know her best; which shall it be? For myself I should recommend it being managed without her knowledge, as Zavertal might discover that her malady was pretended, and achieve his purpose in some other way—without tampering with her medicine."

The idea of secret drugging, however skilfully and harmlessly it might be done, was repugnant to me, and I told Mr. Kennard what I thought. I knew that the dear girl's brave spirit would enable her to play her part perfectly, especially as it was to bring confusion on the wretch who had ill-treated her lover.

"Very well, have it your way," was the reply. "We will lay the trap to-morrow. Meet me here after breakfast for final arrangements while Zavertal is inspecting the crew. Good-night, and courage."

He vanished round the corner of the wheelhouse, and after waiting a few minutes I, too, went out on to the deck, dazed and horror-struck by what I had heard, but determined to be worthy of the trust reposed in me.

During the ensuing night it will be remembered that first Vizard and then Captain Forrester were picked up, and the latter will resume his pen to relate the complications that resulted.

CHAPTER XXI.

Dr. Zavertal Loses a Patient.

(Captain Forrester's Narrative Continued.)

The horror of hearing that Aline was ill, and that Zavertal had been called in to attend her, left me for a minute stunned and helpless; but the shutting and locking of the surgery door, followed by the sound of a receding footstep, roused me to action. The doctor was already starting to visit his patient.

I sprang to the door of my cabin, only to find it locked; but one of the sailors on guard opened it in answer to my appeal, standing in the entrance so as to block all possible exit. From behind him the black-bearded face of his mate peered at me, and I saw that two of the most powerful

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seamen in the crew had been selected for the post of gaolers to their late Captain. To make a rush for freedom could only end in discomfiture.

"See here, my men; there's a hundred pounds a-piece for you if you'll just forget to mind that doorway for a minute," I said. "And I will guarantee that you shall never know what it is to want a good berth again."

The foremost man made a wry face and gave a sea-scrape. "Very sorry, Captain," he said. "We might think of it if so be it was going to do you any good. But what 'ud be the use on it? You'd be collared and brought back afore you'd got half the length of the ship."

There was a good deal of rude sense in his way of looking at it. But I felt that at all hazards I must warn Mrs. Brinkworth against allowing Zavertal access to Aline, and accordingly altered my tactics.

"Would you take a note for me—to one of the lady passengers?" I asked.

The man turned to whisper to his mate, but before they had come to any conclusion Kennard pushed his way past them into the cabin, and in his character of a privileged visitor shut the door in their faces.

"It's all right," he said, seeing that I was about to fire up again. "You ought to have trusted me sufficiently, Forrester, to know that I was only kidding when I was here an hour ago. There was a very good reason. Zavertal was watching us, and listening to every word that passed, from the surgery—just as I believe he took stock of you in Nathan's office through the Black Sea chart on the day they engaged you. I am not in the habit of selling my friends."

"You do well to blame me," I said, overjoyed at the discovery of my mistake. "But you must remember what tortures of suspense I am undergoing, and forgive me. Why even now that villain has gone below to his deadly work."

"It is of that that I come to tell you," he said. "Miss Challenor is a brave and willing patient in his hands, with a full knowledge of his designs." And he went on to describe the trap that he and Mrs. Brinkworth had laid, and to assure me that nothing would pass Aline's lips that could possibly harm her.

"See here, my men; there's a hundred pounds a-piece for you."

"All I want is to get a sample of the Doctor's medicine for analysis, and then my case against him and Vizard will be complete," he said. "I am a fairly good chemist, and as soon as my tests have found poison, I shall go to McIntyre and lay the facts before him. Unless he wants to risk being tried as an accessory, he will have those two put under lock and key, and start for home with them, without more ado. And now, what really happened on the *Miranda*? So far I only have Vizard's version, you know."

I shortly recounted what had befallen, since parting with him at Pisa, not forgetting to mention Vizard's triumphant assertion that he, Kennard, had been killed by him at Leghorn. He listened intently to the end, and then said:

"He left the *Miranda* in the company of the Italian engineer, you say. He was alone in the boat when picked

He gently inserted the blade in one of the holes.

up, which looks very much as if he had two murders to account for during the last three days. He must have taken a short way of destroying evidence. I think, too, I can explain his supposition that he had put me under the sand. After changing back into my Waldo get-up I gave the clothes in which he saw me in the train to a loafer on the beach. The poor beggar must have put them on and paid for them with his life. I chose him for the gift because he was about my height and build. But hush—not a word—there is Zavertal back at the surgery."

The sound of the next door being unlocked, opened, and relocked reached us, and at the same moment Kennard glided across the cabin to the partition-wall. Running his hand deftly over the panelling, he stopped at a piece of carved fret-work over the wash-stand, examined it closely, and then taking a penknife from his pocket gently inserted the blade in one of the holes, to which at the same time he applied his eye.

After a long gaze, apparently into the thickness of the partition, he turned, and with a finger on his lips, beckoned me to join him. Still keeping his knife in the hole in the fret-work, he motioned me to place my eye where his had been, and I immediately saw that the ornament simply covered an aperture into the surgery, its function being concealed from any occupant of my cabin by a piece of cloth, the colour of the panels, which Kennard had raised slightly with his knife. Zavertal was standing at the dispensary shelf, with his back to us, manipulating the bottles.

Kennard only allowed me a peep, and then drawing me aside resumed his place at the hole—watching intently for fully five minutes. At the end of that time he suddenly withdrew the knife, allowing the cloth veil to fall into position, and remained perfectly still. Listening breathlessly, we heard Zavertal move across the surgery and go out, taking his usual precaution of locking the door behind him. His footsteps died away in the direction of the companion-stairs.

"He has gone below with the medicine," said Kennard

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"but he will not incur suspicion by personally administering it. Should he try to do so Mrs. Brinkworth has her instructions and is quite equal to the occasion."

"Aline—Miss Challenor—is not still feigning unconsciousness?" I asked, for the idea of my sweet girl being subjected to all this was horrible to me.

"Oh dear, no," replied Kennard; "that would have been trying her too much. She partially 'recovered' before Zavertal's first visit, but she cleverly managed to look quite ill enough for the purpose."

"Does she know that I am on board?"

"Yes, the news of your being picked up furnished an excellent excuse for the faint," said Kennard. "I have no doubt that Zavertal, having an opportunity ready made for him, will reverse the intended programme and devote his fiendish cunning to her case before taking on Lord Darranmore's—and yours, which he most certainly means shall follow. The villains would never rest till you are as dead as I am supposed to be; for then, with the exception of the man Dicey, they would be free, or believe themselves to be free, from all sources of accusation."

"They will probably settle Dicey, too," said I, thinking of the disappearance of the *Miranda's* engineer.

"That is quite on the cards," replied Kennard, "and I am keeping an anxious watch for his return to sense. The delirium is already abating, and as soon as possible I shall try and frighten him into rounding on his employers. Now that Zavertal believes, from his observations through that fret-work, that "Waldo" is obnoxious to you, I can come and go anywhere on the ship without incurring suspicion. After what passed this morning, though, I must not negative that impression by visiting you too frequently. Expect me when I have definite news, and in the meanwhile don't be afraid of your food. They won't have two 'cases' on hand at once."

Gripping me by the hand, which was more than I deserved after my mistrust, he slipped out of the cabin and I was left alone to my thoughts. They were brighter far than any I had had for days; for though anxiety would last till those two fiends were openly accused, I could not help feeling confident that Kennard would beat them now. And yet, so long as there remained the possibility of a hitch in the arrangements—of some fiendish trickery which should baffle Mrs. Brinkworth's watchfulness and the detective's foresight—my mind could not but be in a turmoil of impatience and dread.

After a midday meal, which was served to me, as my breakfast had been, by one of the door-keepers, I fell asleep, utterly wearied and worn out by the experience of the previous night. For some time my brain enjoyed a respite of perfect oblivion, but after a while I began to dream, and a vision of strange scenery and fantastic shapes formed before my sightless eyes.

Gradually, out of the blackness, there grew the outline of a gigantic precipice, running sheer down to a boiling sea, studded with jagged fangs of rock. On the top of the cliff, bent inland by the force of a thousand gales, stood a solitary tree, and a few feet from its base two men were locked together in deadly struggle, their bodies swaying hither and thither, on the brink of the abyss.

A vision of strange scenery and fantastic shapes.

As the vision grew clearer I saw that round the tree-trunk was made fast a rope, one end of which dangled fifty feet down the side of the cliff, supporting the form of a woman. All at once a blood-red moon appeared in the sky, and shed a lurid light on the struggling men, showing me the faces of Zavertal and Kennard. Even as I looked Zavertal seemed to prevail, and shaking Kennard free hurled him over the precipice. Then, as he sprang knife in hand towards the straining rope, I recognised in the dangling figure—Aline.

I awoke with a cry of horror on my lips to find McIntyre standing over me, a gravely sympathetic expression on his rugged Scotch face.

"I roused you too roughly," he said in a kindly tone. "I'm not thinking that you bear malice over this affair, so I just looked in to do you a turn unbeknown to anybody. You have mayhap heard that the young lady, Miss Challenor, is ill?"

McIntyre was right in supposing that I felt no resentment against him for his involuntary usurpation. And he was ten years older than myself, a married man and the father of a family, so that I could accept from him as friendly interest what I might have regarded as an impertinent suggestion from another.

"Yes," I replied; "I have heard of it. Is she worse?"

"It's just that that brings me," he said with increased solemnity. "Every one on the ship knows you were sweethearts, and I was thinking it's not fair for you not to see her and she so sick. So come along with me and I'll take you to her."

Greatly agitated, I rose to follow him; though, as the good fellow was clearly acting on his own responsibility and in ignorance of the ruse that was being played, I could not believe that there was real cause for alarm. Still, the awful chance that vigilance had been eluded by professional cunning was ever present, and as I passed out of the cabin with my conductor I braced myself for what in any case must be an ordeal.

That McIntyre was not yet in Kennard's confidence and still thought me mad was proved by the fact that the two seamen followed us at a respectful distance, doubtless by his instructions. There were no passengers about, and the clock on the companion-stairs furnished the reason by proclaiming that it was the saloon dinner-hour. At the foot of the stairs we turned aft into the corridor, and here again

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there was no one to be seen. Only from the open door of number seventeen state-room came the sound of a woman's weeping.

"I fear she is worse," said McIntyre, hastening his steps. But the sound of crying was too much for me, and

Mrs. Brinkworth was endeavouring hysterically to prevent Zavertal from approaching the bed.

springing past him I rushed to the state-room door. Aline lay in her berth, her features serenely calm in waxen whiteness, while Mrs. Brinkworth was endeavouring hysterically to prevent Zavertal from approaching the bed.

"You shall not touch her," she cried frantically. "My darling girl is dead, and no hands but mine shall tend her. Go away, I say, and leave me to close her eyes."

"It is usual for the Doctor to verify a decease, but I can see that there is no room for doubt in this case," Zavertal replied. "I leave you, madam, with my deepest sympathy."

Then he turned to come away and saw me. His hand went to his breast-pocket, but I was too quick for him, and clutching his collar I dragged him from that sacred presence to pin him by the throat to the corridor wall outside with fingers keen to strangle. As I gazed into his fast-purpling face all the agony of knowing that he had prevailed broke from me in one hissed word:

"*Murderer!*"

(To be concluded.)

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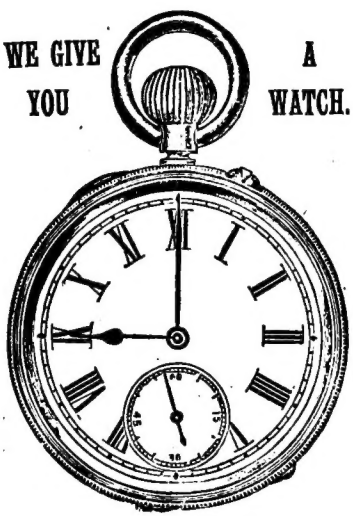

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Total	12s. 6d.	

In addition to the above Every Purchaser will be Presented Free of Charge with one of our handsome

KEYLESS WATCHES.

USUALLY SOLD AT HALF-A-GUINEA.

Read what is said by those who have purchased.

WANTS A SECOND PARCEL.

Lowick-by-Neale, Northumberland, August 17.

GENTLEMEN,—Received to-day your second parcel of jewellery, with which we are immensely pleased. We really wonder how you can do it. The watch itself is worth more than the money charged for the whole. Many thanks for punctuality.—Very truly yours, WILLIAM McISAAC.

GOES BETTER THAN HIS £15 WATCH.

11, North Street, St. Peters, Tunbridge Wells.

GENTLEMEN,—Some few weeks ago I sent to your firm for the jewellery and advertised watch, of which I am surprised; the *watch* is a beautiful timist. I must admit, in fact, it goes better than my £15 gold watch; and for the jewellery it is astonishing value. I think you must lose money over such gifts, as I tell it. The watch alone is worth double the 7s. I enclosed. I have shown it to several of my friends, and they were astonished. You can add this to your testimonials if it will be of any service.—I am, Gentlemen, yours faithfully, LEWIS C. RHODES.

GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a Correct Timekeeper. Call and see them.

We do this to save the enormous cost of advertising, preferring to give our customers the benefit. As we lose money on each parcel we cannot supply more than two parcels to one person. If you cannot call get a P.O. at once, and send for this wonderful parcel. Orders will be executed in Rotation. **MONEY RETURNED IF NOT AS REPRESENTED.**

NOTE.—The entire parcel will be sent for 6s. 6d. (post free, registered, 7s.). Each customer will receive gratis one of our HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES. Be sure and call or send to-day for the

6s. 6d. Monster Presentation Parcel including the Handsome Keyless Watch.

S. S. GRAHAM & CO., 277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.